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A home that takes sustainability to a whole new level.

COVER:

The home of Candace and Gordon Franke. Photo: Darrell Noakes.

Keen on Green: New Home Trends

There are so many terms these days that describe the concept of practicing sensible, environmentally-conscious living. *Green* is no longer a colour or a golf course; it is a label for any product or method that purports to contribute to this philosophy.

Sustainable is another of those words that is used to brand an act, product, or method that brings us closer to Mother Earth.

Then, of course, there are words and phrases like *all-natural*, *eco-wise* and *enviro-friendly* that crop up on labels of products to indicate that if we buy them, we will be doing our part to reduce our carbon footprint.

That all said, the concept of environmentally-conscious living, no matter how you want to call it, has become much more complex than just taking your glass bottles to the dump or using fabric bags instead of plastic bags to carry your groceries. But, still, the 4 R's, reduction, reuse, recycling and recovery, remain one of the essential cores of doing it right.

This issue of Saskatoon Home is devoted to how you can live more environmentally-conscious at home. In our departments, you'll find dozens of tips including how to make your home more energy-efficient, how to choose sustainable and eco-friendly (there we go!) outdoor furniture, hot tubs and accessories

and how to indulge in garage sale finds without becoming a pack rat. You'll learn about sustainable moving (no more cardboard boxes!), and purifying your indoor air with plants.

In our feature section, two couples share their tales of creating their ideal homes through renovation and infill. Another couple shares how they turned their abode into an optimally energy-efficient residence with geothermal and wind-generated power. You'll also find out everything about the latest "lean and green" fridges and laundry machines. Finally, our esteemed panel of professional experts weigh in on exactly how far Saskatoon has come in terms of sustainable residential development policies and philosophy.

You'll notice this summer issue of Saskatoon Home has expanded from 48 to 64 pages. This is the result of increased support from our advertisers. We are truly appreciative of and grateful to these many professionals and suppliers who are here to make your home living an optimal experience. We are proud to present these talented individuals and companies in our magazine and encourage you to use their services.

Whether you want to call our new home living consciousness green, sustainable or eco-friendly, it's all a good thing. By improving our practices at home, we also help to improve the planet.

DONA STURMANIS, EDITOR

HOME

SASKATOON

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Standing (left to right) - Gerri Millard, Lori Krogan, Kristi Knippel, Marlene Miller, Greg Graves, Pinky Nundy, Claire Clark, Geoff Rathgaber, Lori Hope, Peggy Jodrey. Sitting (left to right) - Jodi Nixon, Kevin Nguyen, Dannon Herr, Greg Jensen, Michelle Olsen.

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FRONTLINES

Saskatoon City Council Accepts South Caswell Hill Redevelop- ment Plan

City Council plans to proceed with the redevelopment of south Caswell Hill, having adopted the concept plan for the area at its regular meeting, April 12.

The ambitious plan will see the retirement of the old bus

barns on Avenue D across from the T. Eaton Lofts, increasing park and community space in the neighbourhood, providing new affordable and market housing, establishing stronger links to the downtown, and establishment of a "creative industry hub."

The concept plan evolved from the Caswell Hill Local Area Plan, which recommended that the city evaluate using the space occupied by the Municipal Transit Facility as a park and consider converting some of the bus barns to a community centre through

adaptive reuse. The city will also work with the Caswell Hill Community Association to identify other potential park space in the neighbourhood. In addition, the plan calls for rezoning at least some of the current light industrial land to commercial and residential, eliminating heavy industrial zoning within the neighbourhood and removing all industrial uses north of the rail line.

A city report said that in 2004, more than 200 properties were "rezoned to facilitate this transition from a historically industrial area to a more

compatible mixed land use."

The location of the transit facility "would be the most desired location for new park space while accommodating other additional land uses," the report added.

"The South Caswell Concept Plan is an important step to establish a common framework, or vision, for how the future transit facility site will ultimately be redeveloped," continued the report. "Much the same way the Pleasant Hill Concept Plan guides decisions on future use of land and buildings, the South Cas-

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well Concept Plan will heighten the potential for optimism among the residents of the neighbourhood, and create an attractive, safe, community focal point."

The planning principles adopted by the city include:

- Creating more green space
- Creating more affordable housing opportunities, especially for seniors and students
- Respecting the community's heritage in the design of in-fill structures
- Reducing crime, minimizing nuisance and vandalism
- Creating better transportation linkages that reduce short-cutting
- Developing a diverse community with a mix of residents of all ages
- Developing safe pedestrian and bike passages
- Accommodating living, shopping, and working within the neighbourhood
- Promoting adaptive reuse and "green" building design

Among the recommendations:

- "Adaptive reuse" of at least two of the existing transit facility buildings, the 1913 Streetcar Barn, at the corner of 24th Street and Avenue D North, and the 1984 transit office, at the south corner of 24th Street and Avenue C North
- A pedestrian-only corridor that includes closing 24th Street between Avenues C and D

- A new one-acre park
- A "focal point" for community recreation, leisure, commercial, and cultural events
- A "rapid" transit stop on the north side of Jamieson Avenue
- A "Rails with Trails" pedestrian linkage along the Canadian Pacific Railway right-of-way.
- Increased residential density
- Three new development sites for mixed-use activities, housing and commercial, adding 52 new housing units to the area
- Two new development sites for 12 low density townhouse style dwellings
- Two new development sites for 62 medium density multiple-unit dwellings
- Design guidelines to retain the heritage and character of Caswell Hill

Architect and LEED consultant Charles Olfert said in a letter to council, "Anytime that publicly owned land and buildings become available for re-development, it is a great opportunity. The concept plan embraces this, but it does this in isolation and does not address the need to create effective linkages through the site and between the community of Caswell, the downtown and the University.

"When you consider that almost all the residents of Caswell are within 1500 meters (a 15 – 20 minute Walk) of Midtown Plaza, the river and downtown, it is unbelievable that there is virtually no safe way for a pedestrian to make this journey," he added.

"We can't get those obnoxious diesel fuels out of there



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soon enough," Olfert told city council. He said the area needed an integrated pedestrian corridor linking downtown, the warehouse district and Caswell Hill.

CITY OF SASKATOON

Lake Placid Still in the Running for River Landing

City Council has decided to give Lake Placid another crack at a hotel-condominium mega-project at River Landing.

Council voted on April 10 to discuss a new sale agreement for the city-owned site known as Parcel "Y" and the adjacent lane, based on the terms and conditions of the original agreement.

The administration will conduct a "due diligence review" with auditors Deloitte & Touche.

Calgary-based Lake Placid sought to revive its earlier proposal for Parcel "Y", after missing a deadline for purchasing the property last October. Local entrepreneur Karim Nasser announced in March that he was joining with Lake Placid CEO Michael Lobsinger on the development.

The \$200-million development proposed in 2007 would include an eight-storey boutique hotel/restaurant, four-storey commercial building with retail, and 20-storey condominium tower. The residential space would include a combination of tower suites, live/work town homes, and terrace homes.

A report to city council said that the appraised value has risen to between \$10.4 million and \$11.6 million. The city had agreed to sell Parcel "Y" in 2008 for \$4.765 million and the lane for \$0.475 million. Lake Placid already owns the former Legion site next door,

which it bought from Remail Ventures Inc. in 2008, and another, smaller lot beside it.

Councillor Maurice Neault, who put forward the motion, wants to see the development go ahead.

"Let's get this project going," he said. "Let's get it off the ground."

The previous agreement worked for everybody, he said.

"Nobody in their right mind is going to pay \$11 million," Neault added. "There's too many conditions."

"To basically just sell it at half of what the estimated price is now, really concerned me," said Charlie Clark, the only councillor to vote against the motion. "What I don't want us to do is continually lower expectations on what we could or should be doing on that very important piece of land."

"The more I look at it, the more I think that there's tre-

mendous opportunity to look at development in a different way there," he added.

DARRELL NOAKES/VERB NEWS

Entry-level Home Ownership Scrapped in Willowgrove

City council voted April 10 to remove a "pre-designation" attached to a 12-acre parcel of land at 1015 Patrick Crescent in Willowgrove for entry-level home ownership.

The city will try to sell the land to the highest bidder, with a reserve price of \$7.08 million.

If it doesn't sell through the tender process, the administration recommended that it should be offered "over-the-counter, on a first-come, first-served basis." At that point, it would be available for market housing.

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An administration report said that the site is too large for developers to finance and could result in an "unacceptable concentration" of entry-level units. The report added that the triangular site is difficult to develop, adding costs that "cannot be absorbed by an entry-level project."

The land was pre-designated by city council in 2008 and offered for sale for "entry-level homeownership multi-unit housing", under the city's Housing Business Plan. Up to 300 units were to be developed, to be sold at prices affordable to households with annual incomes between \$52,000 and \$75,000.

The city mailed its request for proposal to more than 50 land developers, builders, and affordable housing providers. Neither the mailout nor advertising and web promotion generated a single proposal.

The city then tried offering the site on a first-come, first-served basis, with one Saskatoon developer expressing an interest, the administration report said.

The report said that the developer "was interested in building entry-level, market, and affordable housing on the site. Numerous meetings were held between this developer and the city; however, in the end, the developer was unwilling to purchase the site."

"Rather than pursue other developers for this site, it is felt that the most prudent course of action would be to remove the designation as an entry-level site," the report concluded.

City council in 2009 pre-designated a 2.5 acre site for entry-level housing in Hampton Village that "should be more suitable for an entry-level development," the report said.

The report noted that the

city currently has pre-designated sites in the following neighbourhoods:

- Hampton Village, entry-level homeownership (currently being rezoned)
- Confederation Park, affordable homeownership (currently being pre-designated)
- Blairmore Suburban Centre, rental housing (proposal currently under review)
- Lakewood Suburban Centre, rental housing (report to Planning and Operations Committee recommending acceptance of a proposal in progress)

In addition, the administration plans to recommend a two to three acre site in Stonebridge for pre-designation for entry-level ownership later in 2010 and a site in Evergreen for entry-level ownership in 2011.

CITY OF SASKATOON

Saskatoon Amends Land Speculation Rules

Saskatoon city council has decided to keep the "three-year time frame to build requirement" and \$50,000 penalty intended to reduce property speculation. However, the city dropped a lifetime ban on purchasers who failed to meet the time frame or residency requirement. The decisions were passed during the regular city council meeting on April 10.

Anyone purchasing property from the city is required to have a dwelling completed and passed all inspections

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within three years of the purchase date.

In 2009, the city amended the lot sales and land allocation policies by extending the two-year build requirement to three years, with a requirement to review the policy annually for new sales.

Council imposed a \$50,000 city mortgage beginning in 2008, to enforce compliance of the "time frame to build" requirement. They saw the lifetime ban as another method to reduce speculators from the market along with the financial penalty. An administration report to city council said that the financial penalty is more effective than the lifetime ban, and recommended removing it.

By late 2008, the new and existing housing markets softened, the administration report said. Individuals and

contractors faced greater difficulty selling homes and obtaining financing, leading to council's decision to extend the time frame from two years to three.

The intent of the original two-year build requirement was to prevent established neighbourhoods from experiencing significant number of vacant lots and to reduce speculators from holding onto lots until prices rise, the report said.

CITY OF SASKATOON

Replacing Lead Water Pipes Now Mandatory in Saskatoon

The City of Saskatoon has made it mandatory to replace lead service pipes bringing water to some homes in older parts of the city.

The administration advised in a report to city council on April 10: "Due to the health and safety concerns regarding higher concentration levels of lead in water if the lead line is cut and rejoined with a new non-lead city portion, the city will be exercising its authority, as outlined in Section C-11.1 22 of The Cities Act, and homeowners will no longer be given the option of replacing their portion of a lead connection."

The replacement will be at the home owner's expense. The city gained the authority under the Cities Act in 2003. Saskatoon is the first city in Canada to make replacement mandatory.

Most water service connections installed throughout North America before 1950 used lead pipe. The city has been replacing the lines as part of an ongoing program or when repair work has been undertaken. A portion of each connection is on city-owned land, while the portion from the house to the property line belongs to the home owner. Until the new mandatory policy was introduced, property owners could choose not to have their portions of the service connection replaced.

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GREEN BRIEFS

Pleasant Hill Condo Goes Solar

Cenith Developments has resumed construction of 12 townhouse units in Pleasant Hill. Located at 315 Avenue N South, these affordable units will incorporate two solar panels systems. The first solar system will reduce the cost of hot water heating via a large holding tank and thermal heat exchanger. The second system will be the first of its kind to incorporate an agreement with Saskatoon Light and Power to sell power back to the grid. Units are expected to be completed by August 31, 2010. Marketing of the units will begin shortly through Century 21.

PLEASANT HILL VILLAGE BLOG,
CITY OF SASKATOON

CHBA-Sask Holds Forum Focusing on Sustainability

Canadian Home Builders' Association — Saskatchewan held a Builders' and Renovators' Industry Trade Forum in Saskatoon, April 13. The forum put an emphasis on sustainability. Len Semko, assistant chief building official with the building standards branch of Saskatchewan's Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing, in Saskatoon, presented a seminar on the Future of Building Codes.

Seven presenters comprised the *Energy Supplier Showcase*, organized by Sun Ridge Group, introduced innovative new products and services for homes. Other seminars provided opportunities to learn about the Energy Star Builder Option

Package and LEED for Homes (LEED-H) Builder Option Package, Cultural Diversity in the Workplace, a modularized safety course developed to assist the residential construction industry in reducing the number of job safety incidents, and online marketing and advertising.

SASKATOON & REGIONAL HOME BUILDERS' ASSOCIATION

port said, adding that the administration has "developed a strategy to determine the City's direction with respect to a curbside recycling program for Saskatoon."

The administration expects to spend \$30,000 on consultations and submit a final report to city council for a decision on November 8.

CITY OF SASKATOON

Survey says Saskatoon Citizens Want Better Recycling

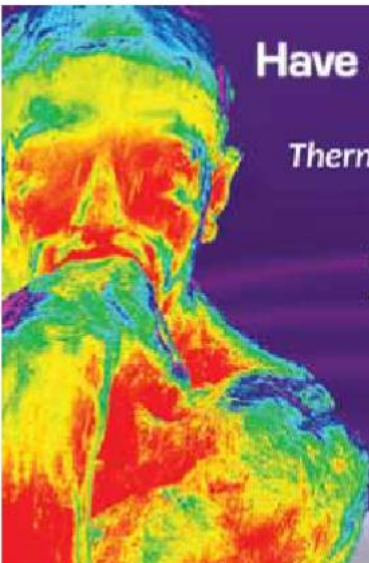
A Utility Services report sent to city council on April 26 says that results from the last 10 civic surveys show that Saskatoon citizens rate recycling "as having a high degree of importance."

Citizens believe that the city needs "more significant recycling initiatives," the re-

Gas Collection to Reduce City's Greenhouse Gas Emissions

City council has approved a recommendation from Utility Services to design a gas collection system and blower/flare station at the landfill, at a cost of \$388,300.

A Utility Services report to council on April 26 said that Saskatoon Light & Power has been working with the



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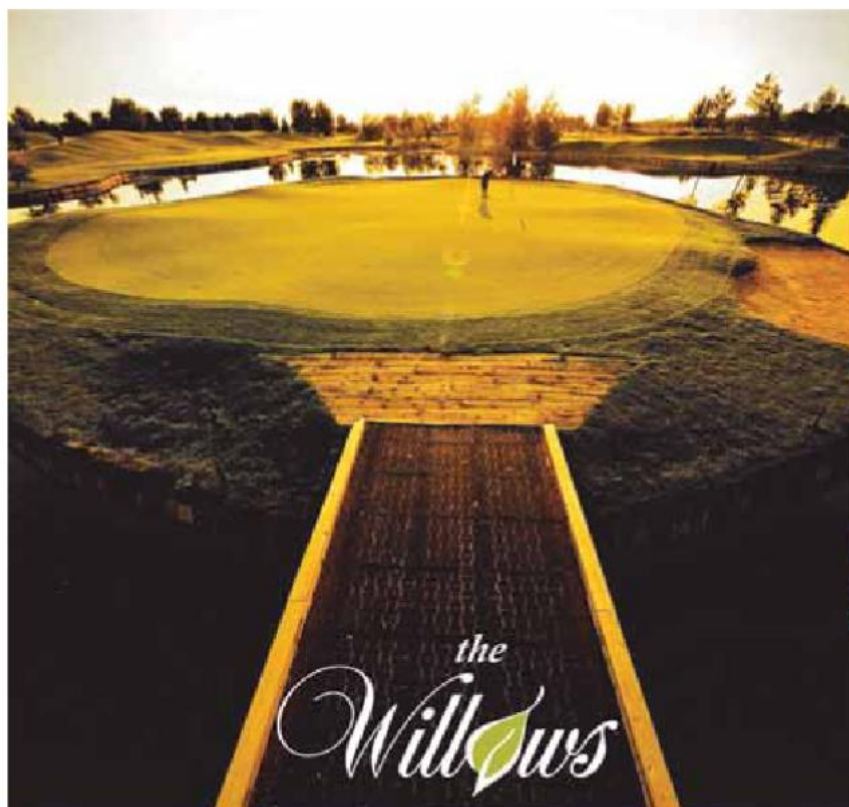
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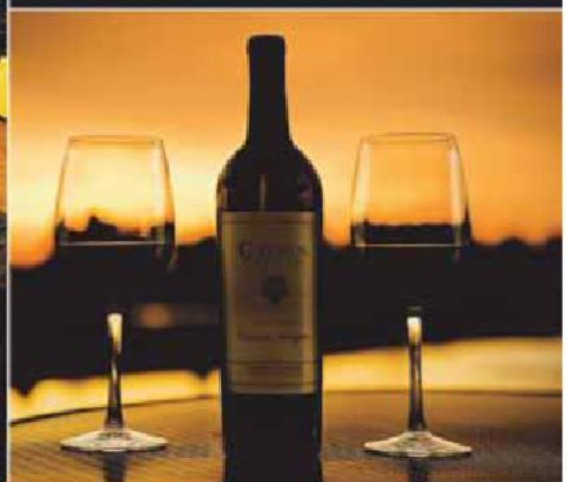
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Timely Tips for a Green Home Office

1 - Put plants in your work space. They are aesthetically pleasing, are said to increase productivity and concentration, absorb toxins from indoor air and improve humidity by returning 90% of the water we give them, making you feel more comfortable.

2 - Reduce heating and cooling. Close off vents to unused rooms while you are working in your home office. In the summer, to keep cool, use a fan in your office and draw those curtains. In the winter, turn down the thermostat, pull the blinds to conserve heat and wear a sweater.

3 - Conserve power. Switch off all your equipment including computers, printers and lights when you are finished working. Turn off cell phone chargers when the phone is fully charged. Better yet, plug everything into a power bar to save energy and flip that off, too, when not in use.

4 - Think light. Turn the lights off in the rest of the house when you are working in your office. Install energy-efficient light bulbs. Make as much use as possible of natural light for reading.

5 - Be paper-savvy. Turn scrap paper into notepads. Use the other side of old documents for writing and printing, or print double-sided. Send emails of PDFs instead of faxing. Reuse old envelopes by putting a label over the old address. Scan your paper files for electronic storage... just be sure to make a back-up! Buy recycled office paper. Keep a recycling bin handy for the paper you do use.

6 - Buy second-hand. Everything in your home office doesn't have to be brand new. Use furniture and shelves you already have. Think before you buy new technology. What you have may be good enough.

7 - Pass it on. Don't throw away your electronics and furniture when you buy new ones. Recycle, donate or sell them when you buy something new.

For more Green Office tips visit www.saskatoon-home.ca/office.htm

Environmental Services Branch to develop a system to capture methane gas emitted from the landfill. The first stage, to be completed by early 2012, will collect and "thermally destruct" the gas in an enclosed flare. Later, the gas will be used to generate power for the Saskatoon Light & Power grid. The city will issue a request for proposals this summer, with the power generation facility expected to go online by summer of 2012.

CITY OF SASKATOON

City Park Local Area Plan Addresses Growth Concerns

City council approved the Local Area Plan for the City Park neighbourhood on April 26.

Said an administration report: "City Park is one of a dozen neighbourhoods approved by city council to undergo a Local Area Plan. The area was originally included in the 1978 and 1991 Core Neighbourhood Studies. The area is experiencing unique circumstances and pressures due to the neighbourhood's age and proximity to the downtown. Improvements are desired within the neighbourhood to ensure the continued long-term viability of the neighbourhood."

"The neighbourhood has been relatively stable in terms of growth and development. However, it does face future challenges with regards to traffic and circulation, land-use pressures, and issues relating to municipal services such as surface deficiencies and aging infrastructure. The future of City Park will be affected most by demands for in-fill develop-

ment. Development concerns identified during the LAP are incompatible residential in-fill developments, possible development at the Weir, future development at City Hospital, and future use of the Mendel Art Gallery and Civic Conservatory."

The plan contains 37 proposed recommendations, in addition to 365 submitted previously, of which 175 have already been completed. It identifies main areas of concern as:

- Traffic and Circulation
 - improving pedestrian safety, addressing parking concerns, and reviewing the residential parking permit program
- Land-Use
 - regarding in-fill development
- Sustainability
 - becoming a champion for active transportation
- Municipal Services
 - addressing surface deficiencies and paving
- Local Area Plan
 - implementation

The approval of the City Park LAP will add an additional 37 recommendations to be implemented.

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PROFILE

Forensics Leads to Business And You Thought Only Superman Could See Through Walls

Cliff Gerow sees through walls. No, he doesn't have X-ray vision, but he does have some pretty sophisticated technology that lets him see if a house has poor insulation, moisture leaks, mould growth, insect or pest activity, or other problems.

Gerow's secret for seeing what others can't comes from thermal imaging. He uses infrared camera technology to detect the minute differences in temperature that can be the first indications of trouble in the home.

It's a unique business for Saskatoon, one that Gerow is uniquely suited to running.

"I've been running my own business for about two years now, but I've been doing thermal imaging for about 20 years," he says.

Most of that work was as a forensic specialist for the RCMP, a job he retired from five years ago.

"We're like CSI, but not nearly as sexy as that," he says with a laugh. "We're the ones who go out to the crime scenes, bring the evidence back in, do most of the analysis and then present our evidence in court."



Cliff Gerow uses infrared camera technology to detect heat leaks in a home.

Since launching Heat Seeker Thermal Imaging, Gerow's business has been increasing steadily, but he still finds that most people don't really know what thermal imaging does.

"Some people, when they think of thermal imaging, think of a plane flying over following cars or, if they're militaristic at all, they think of thermal imaging sights for

tanks and all kinds of things. They just don't see the application of it."

"The technology's been around forever, but it has so many applications it's hard to nail it down," he says.

Not long ago, an elderly couple given care of their grandchild asked him to check a house they were thinking of buying. Cliff's camera revealed

a lot of mould. Although the house was repairable, it would have been too much for this couple to manage — and even worse had they not learned of the hidden hazard.

In addition to scanning the exterior of a house to look for thermal leaks, such as finding poor insulation, he's been called to check for heat generated by electrical wiring, find the exact location of in-floor heating pipes or locate sources of leaky roofs. He's also been requested to check the installation of doors and windows.

A friend suggested he look at horses that had been hurt.

"If you've got an injury, it swells up a little bit, the blood rushes to it, increases the heat, and I can find it," he says. "Where they can't find some injuries with an X-ray or an ultra-sound, I can see it very clearly. So now, I've started doing the equine side of things."

A veterinarian asked if he could look at injured dogs.

"Sure enough, it works the same way. Every time I think, 'that's it,' something new comes up. It's very interesting work."

"I do quite a bit for manufacturing and industrial side of things," says Gerow, noting that his work takes him throughout Saskatchewan and into Alberta.

For example, he might get called to do building electrical surveys, imaging the junction boxes, breaker boxes and

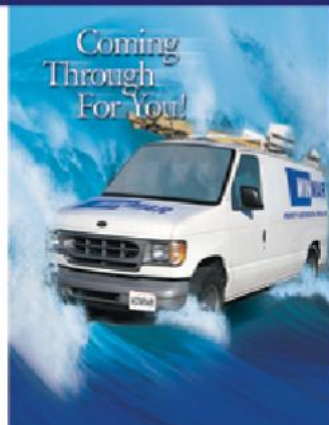
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wiring. At one location, he was able to narrow down the source an annoying, intermittent electrical problem. The thermography showed a different heat signature for two electrical panels, compared to the remaining ones. That gave the building owner a starting place for the electricians, instead of having them take days or perhaps weeks to go painstakingly through every circuit in the building.

Gerow gives another example: "There's a downtown office building. I just did their electrical room on each floor, spotted what I thought were problems. I flagged them and then they have the electrician come in and check. Instead of days of work, it was hours."

He's also in demand in the oil industry. With the naked

eye, it's hard to tell what might be in a storage tank, but when Gerow turns his camera towards it, he can tell how much oil is inside, how much water is on top, and how much sediment has accumulated at the bottom. He can spot pump jack bearings and bushings that are overheating because of worn parts.

"The nice thing is my technology non-destructive," he says. "I don't have to put a probe in your wall. I don't have to poke a hole in your roof."

"I can do it at a distance, a safe distance, for both myself and for everybody around me," he adds. "It's just a good idea."

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SUPPLIERS

A Fence that Makes Sense: Make Sure What Surrounds You is Made of the Right Stuff

Fencing products today are no longer simply a marker of personal space; they're also a marker of personal style.

"Your fence acts as your barrier and your security system from everything around you," says Jordan Krawchuk, owner of Krawchuk Construction, a company that helps people build and renovate their homes. "But as more people than ever before expand their living space to include their backyards, it also has to have a certain aesthetic appeal."

For Krawchuk, the trend he sees more and more are fences made of pressure-treated wood.

"The old picket fence that people used to build was made of spruce," says Krawchuk. "And that material needs to be primed, painted or stained to 'cure' it and to help it resist the weather. So while it's less expensive than pressure-treated wood, it also requires yearly maintenance."

Treated with a stain that resists termites, sunlight and water damage, pressure-treated wood does not require finishing, and can last maintenance-free anywhere from 20-25 years, if not longer. The problem with it, says



An attractively surrounded deck enhances the appearance of a home.



A pressure treated wood fence can last maintenance-free for 25 years.

Krawchuk, lies in the process of building the fence.

"Every time you cut and screw, you create a hole, where you are now displaying the non-treated material that can become weathered and rot where the screw holes are or where the cut ends are."

While Krawchuk says this problem can be easily treated with the purchase of a paint or stain that can be applied to all the cut areas, the fence you build yourself will never be as resistant as it is when it comes pre-made from the factory.

The Vinyl Alternative

Linda Friesen, of Fenced in Vinyl, a custom fabrication company of fences and other outdoor products, is naturally a great advocate of vinyl fences.

"Vinyl can stand the test of time," says Friesen. "Admittedly it's an investment, but it's a lifetime investment."

But "buyer beware," says Friesen. Not all vinyls are created equally.

"People really need to do their homework when choosing a vinyl product," says Friesen. "They should actually look at a cross-section of all the varying grades before deciding on one. It all has to do with the thickness of the vinyl's wall."

Available in a variety of colours with added UV inhibitors that stop colours from fading, vinyl fences not only act as a very private backdrop for your outdoor living space, they can also effectively block wind, as long as they are installed properly.

"Just like there are different types of lumber, there are different grades of vinyl, different styles of vinyl, and different ways of putting vinyl up. We believe in doing 5-6 foot centres [supporting posts in the ground], and we'd never recommend anyone going as far as an 8 foot centre. It may save a bit of money in the beginning, with less posts in the ground," cautions Friesen. "but in the long run, you're

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going to have trouble with your fence, and its ability to stand up to high winds will be compromised."

Fencing the Deck

For those with smaller yards, the best fencing solution to ensure aesthetics, privacy and wind blockage may not lie in how you surround your yard, but in how you surround your deck.

"Many of these new subdivisions have houses that are so close together, half the time you can share a ketchup bottle with your neighbour off his deck," laughs Derek Hanneson, of Hanneson Construction, exterior specialists. "That's why going with the option of customized deck railings can give you a lot of privacy and the illusion that you're by yourself."

Made from maintenance-free, powder-coated aluminum that can be found in a wide variety of colours, today's deck railings can be combined with added glass inserts which can effectively block wind and sun.

"Many glass inserts are available with reflective coatings that allow you to look out, but prevents others from looking in," says Hanneson.

While each type of fencing available ranges in price, the one thing all three of the latest fencing materials have in common is their ability to exist maintenance free.

"I think society has gotten to a zero maintenance tolerance for fences," says Hanneson. "And I see a lot more of that coming ahead, because people just don't want to have to work on it or to replace it. They just want to enjoy it."

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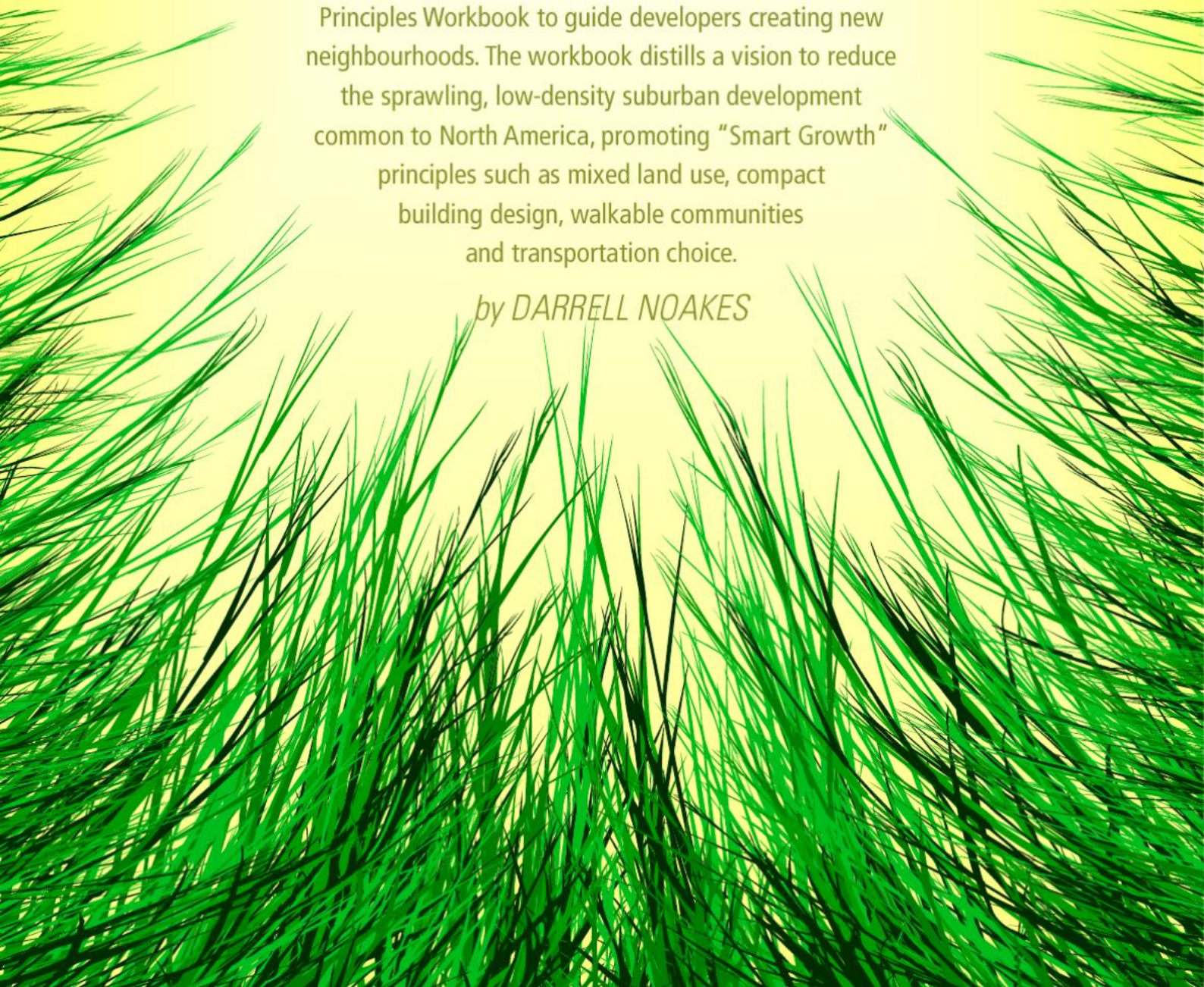
Our staff would be happy to answer any questions you may have. Ask for Ken, Barry, Darcy, Kym, Dylan, Deb, Lorraine, Booker or Trevor.

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Sustainable Saskatoon: **Are We There Yet?**

Saskatoon is starting to show an innovative spirit, when it comes to embracing sustainability. In February, the city published a Sustainable Development Guiding Principles Workbook to guide developers creating new neighbourhoods. The workbook distills a vision to reduce the sprawling, low-density suburban development common to North America, promoting “Smart Growth” principles such as mixed land use, compact building design, walkable communities and transportation choice.

by DARRELL NOAKES





The idea behind the workbook,

says Saskatoon neighbourhood planning manager Alan Wallace, is to get developers to consider sustainability options when they develop new neighbourhoods. Those options include, for example, orienting the lots, and subsequent buildings, so that they respond to sun and shade patterns, reduce fossil fuel use through shielding from prevailing winds, or capture rainwater run-off to minimize the impact of storms.

The city hopes to raise awareness of the principles and design features of new, sustainable neighbourhoods in Saskatoon and the surrounding region. Those principles can as effectively be applied to established neighbourhoods when builders consider their in-fill practices, as to new subdivision developments.

It's a bit of a compromise. The city didn't think compelling developers to implement green building practices would gain much traction. Besides, the LEED standard for the neighbourhood development rating is still evolving, expected to be introduced later this year. It could still be some time before there are standards capable of being enforced. The city hopes that a more collaborative approach will guide applicants toward implementing projects that are a benefit to the community.

But there's always the riddle of acceptance. Developers invest a lot of time and money into their projects. Mistakes can ruin them, so they tend to be cautious. Even if a developer were to take a chance on implementing a "green" neighbourhood, it might not fly, with a public accustomed to the way things have always been. Just look at the controversy brewing over Saskatoon's discussion of a tall wind turbine, a submerged hydro power station and redevelopment of the weir.

"Realistically, I don't know that it is that difficult," says one consultant working on a development in a new neighbourhood. "I think the planners and the city are pretty good. (They) have been very accommodating and open to new ideas. It's really just a commitment from the developers to move in that direction."

"We're not afraid of it because we've seen it," he says. "I think typically what happens is, if you've never done it there's a fear of

doing something different because you don't know if it's going to be successful, whereas we've done it."

It's about having an "innovative drive" to create more sustainable communities, he says.

Yet, even as developers approach sustainability with some reticence, there's a strong trend moving in that direction. If that trend isn't being pushed by developers, it's certainly being pulled by consumers.

There's a global movement toward being greener, the consultant points out. All cities have to get in line with that, he says.

Vancouver and Calgary are showing that it's possible to build more sustainable neighbourhoods, with significantly higher densities that facilitate walking and reduce reliance on driving, making use of natural drainage patterns and reducing water consumption, or zoning that limits sprawl for example. At the moment, Saskatoon lags behind these cities.

"I know they're trying to go for 'sustainable,'" says the consultant, "but they've really got a long ways to go. We can only do so much, given the zoning that we currently have."

Partly, provincial and municipal regulations stand in the way of the innovations needed to try new methods of creating communities that limit sprawl and promote sustainable development.

Saskatoon's been taking steps to move in the right direction with neighbourhoods such as Evergreen and Rosewood.

Unfortunately, Rosewood is a little less dense than the kind of sustainable community that the city should be aiming for, but it's still looking to be a very good community, the consultant says.

What's really needed, he says, is a "new brand of community."



A Tale of Two Homes

How In-fill and Reno Created Ideal Abodes

Part One of a Three-Part Series

For two couples, each looking to find their dream home, the call of living in their favourite old neighborhoods was one that couldn't be ignored. Each couple looked for and found unique solutions to their housing quests in a way that best suited their personal tastes, budgets and personalities.

In this three-part series, we'll meet these two couples and follow them on their dream house journeys as they begin by taking their first tentative searching steps, right on up to their final reveal, in this...a tale of two homes.

by GAIL JANSEN



Photos: Courtesy Nina and Greg Moe



The Moes documented the progress of their home being completely gutted and now the renovation that is underway.

For couples Nina and Greg Moe, and Darla Tenold and Fahmy Bekhit, the decision to upgrade from their present homes was an easy one to make, but the search for the perfect home was one that would prove relentlessly elusive. While homes they looked at in new developments lacked the space and the character both couples preferred, older homes lacked the modern layouts and custom options they were looking for.

With new developments reluctantly stricken from their potential lists despite their modern amenities, both couples decided to look at older homes in established neighborhoods, hoping they would find their perfect houses. They wanted homes that would have the character and space they desired, the modern efficiencies they hoped for, in the established neighborhoods they loved.

What they found was a hunt that was akin to searching for a needle in a haystack.



With little found in the way of suitable houses that met all of their needs, both couples decided they would need to think of alternate ways they could have the homes they desired, in the neighbourhoods they wanted.

Nina and Greg Moe:

They Discover Reno is Their Way to Go

"We wanted our house to be a haven," says Nina. "A place where we enjoy coming home to relax, so we were also a little bit concerned about the aspect of living in a construction zone for the next 10 years, something we felt you pretty much sign up for if you're going to live in one of the newer neighborhoods, or build on a newer lot."

For Nina and Greg, who admittedly were "all over the place" when it came to their search, they originally started out with a plan to build a brand new home in a newer development, going so far as to place a down payment on a lot. Still not fully happy with the idea, they even entertained the idea of purchasing a downtown condo, before finally settling on the solution that both ultimately felt was the right one for them, which was to buy an older home and completely gut it and renovate it to their own specifications.

Finding the Right Property

Nina and Greg searched for a home whose exterior would require little to no maintenance, one that would have instant curb appeal, and an established yard. What they weren't looking for was a home where they would end up paying for someone else's renovation.

"Sometimes people do things to sell a home," says Nina. "And we thought, well, that's nice that you did that, but we're just going to tear it out anyways. We wanted to feel that we were getting good value for whatever home we bought in that sense."

They got that feeling they got when they found a house that fit their criteria to a tee.

"When we walked up to this home, we had a great feeling about it immediately," says Nina. "The curb appeal was fabulous, it had alleys on two sides, and the exterior was meticulous. The outside had just been totally redone, with new decking and landscaping that was maintenance-free,

something we were looking for because we go away to our cabin a lot in the summer."

"We pretty much walked up to it and fell in love with it immediately," adds Nina.

Nina and Greg were hoping the inside would be as nice as the outside. They were pleasantly surprised when their expectations were met.

"When we walked in, the interior of the house was nice, and clean, and while the layout didn't work for us, we immediately got a great feeling from the home. We could see the space there, and knew we could do something really special."

Finding the Right Person for the Job

Purchasing windows for their summer cabin a few years back, Nina and Greg were given a recommendation for a contractor with whom the supplier had done business with. He eventually completed the renovations on their cabin. He would also be their choice to make the renovations on the new house.

"Quite frankly when we found out that our offer on the house was accepted," laughs Nina, "the very first phone call I made after that wasn't to my mom or any of my friends, it was to our contractor to let him know we had found our house."

Nina and Greg collaborated to create a design that was what they were both looking for as well as one that was physically workable in the space they had purchased.

"Greg and I had some very specific ideas of what we knew we wanted and we made a list. But the reality of it is that the contractors then have to say, 'Is that a realistic possibility?'"

After we had given them our specific ideas, they then had to come back to us and say, 'Okay, we've heard you and here is what we can do to help you with that.'"



Darla Tenold and Fahmy Bekhit:

They Decide In-fill Will Fit Their Bill

"The reason we didn't want to go to a new development," says Darla, "is because we liked our central location, our mature neighborhood and the fact that there are trees, back alleys, and different kinds of houses. For us, we find the new developments a little too sterile."

"Plus," add Fahmy, speaking of the couple's current neighbourhood, "we fell in love with this area, and didn't really want to leave it."

Darla and Fahmy also exhausted a myriad of potential solutions. These ranged from pricing out the cost of an addition to their existing home that would ultimately prove to be too expensive for the final product, to searching fruitlessly for a home suitable to gut.

But it wasn't until they saw an example of what could be done using an in-fill that they decided the solution for them was to build a brand new home on an existing older lot.

"We had looked at an in-fill that was newly built and up for sale in Varsity View," said Darla. "And while we didn't end up making an offer on that house, it's what gave us the idea to build an in-fill of our own."

Darla and Fahmy could see what their new house would look like in the midst of in-fill construction.



Photo: Courtesy Darla Tenold and Fahmy Bekhit

Finding the Right Property

While Darla and Fahmy's search for a solution to their housing dilemma was over, the search for just the right property on which to execute that solution was just beginning.

Their criteria was far different from that of Nina and Greg. The pair were more concerned with the lot size than its landscaping, and unconcerned with the home's layout, considering their plans to either move it or demolish it. What was important to the pair was that the lot came with a reasonable price tag and that the home would not prove too costly to demolish.

"When we found this property," says Fahmy, "it had a small house of only 500 square feet on a big developed lot, but it also had a fairly new garage that had been taken good care of."

"It was one of the main things that helped us to make our decision," he adds, "because now we knew we wouldn't have to build a garage as well as a house. Considering at the time this house was the cheapest that was listed, we figured it was a really good opportunity and jumped on it."

Finding the Right Person for the Job

For Darla and Fahmy, the process of finding the right builder was not quite so straightforward.

"When we bought the lot and the house, we had no idea about building," says Fahmy. "We went around to some show homes in some of the newer areas, took some pamphlets, and based on those, we phoned some builders."

They met with four builders before narrowing it down to one, choosing Sanoma Homes. They had seen the builders' previous work, spoken to the owners of a home they had built, and felt their excitement for the project. It was also important that they would have the support they would need as they went forward with their build.

"For me, personally," says Darla, "I wasn't so interested in any house things and design things. I just wanted someone who would give us a lot of personal service, so that we could be involved and get the custom house that we wanted without having to do a lot of the work ourselves."

Read the fall issue of Saskatoon Home to follow these stories, or visit www.saskatoon-home.ca for updates and photos between issues.

PROFESSIONAL PANEL



It's not always easy being green. In Saskatoon, that means moving towards sustainable residential development. It's a complex paradigm involving city planners, visionary developers and environmentally-conscious homeowners and buyers. Saskatoon Home weighed in with some experts: a green renovator, a sustainable developer, a city planner and a sustainable energy engineer to capture some insight into how far Saskatoon has come on many different levels towards achieving eco-friendly home and neighbourhood development goals. There are also some tips on what home owners and buyers can do to become more energy-efficient. And believe it: these are simple!

THE EXPERTS SCOOP ON ECO-WISE SASKATOON DEVELOPMENT

PARTICIPANTS



Michael Leggett is the owner of Equinox Home Innovations, a Saskatoon-based green home renovation and contracting company. He has over 10 years of experience working in various construction areas, and has degrees in community development and environmental design from the University of Guelph and York University.



Curtis Olson is obsessed with the challenge and beauty of urban development. His company, Shift Development Inc., focuses on residential and commercial spaces in the city's core areas. His current project is the Two Twenty, an office + cafe + studio project to house the city's most forward thinking design businesses on 20th Street West.



Alan G. Wallace, MCIP, is the manager of neighbourhood planning, Planning and Development Branch, at the City of Saskatoon. Over 25 years with the City of Saskatoon, he has worked in nearly all areas of planning and development. He manages the Neighbourhood Planning program which includes affordable housing, local area planning, neighbourhood safety, and neighbourhood and downtown revitalization.



Kelly Winder, M.Sc., P.Eng. has worked in the field of energy efficiency since completing his international master's degree in sustainable energy engineering from the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, Sweden in 2003. Kelly works as an engineer in the building performance business unit within Saskatchewan Research Council, a group that specializes in improving the energy efficiency of buildings in Saskatchewan and beyond.

Are Saskatoon homeowners, including those who wish to renovate, and those who wish to buy new homes, favouring sustainable features and practices more than they did before? What are they looking for?

Leggett: I think the majority are doing so largely as a result of a good return on investment, and as a result of various rebate programs (although that may now change). A smaller percentage seem to be driven more so by an ethic of thinking about global/environmental implications of our energy consumption patterns. I have found in my work with customers that the majority of customers, however, when I explain various green practices and products to them, are often quite supportive and inclined to opt for green options.

Olson: I see more home buyers looking for fully-integrated green design throughout the homes they are seeking. They're not content with entry-level green products that have typically been add-ons in the past. For example, they're coming with questions about locally-sourced finishing materials, solar water heating systems and even alternative building envelope systems. Today's buyer is very well-informed and has done their research beforehand.

Wallace: The next generation of home buyers is more conscious of the need to consider environmentally-friendly materials in their new home, and are looking for new features which reduce water and energy consumption. This expectation appears to be growing in the marketplace. A new set of values are being expressed around conservation, but cost is still a major factor to most consumers.

What is the City of Saskatoon doing to encourage more energy efficiency and sustainability elements in housing?

Leggett: As far as I am aware, the city's efforts have until recently been largely focussed on its own municipal buildings in terms of bringing them to a point of greater energy efficiency. With the recent partnership with Roadmap 2020,

and as part of an energy and greenhouse gas initiative, the city seems to be now exploring a wider implementation of sustainable initiatives. Whether this partnership will offer encouragement to homeowners in terms of reducing energy consumption levels and shifting to more sustainable energies like geothermal, wind and solar, is yet to be seen.

Olson: Saskatoon is moving towards zoning revisions that allow and encourage more infill and high density development, which in my opinion, are some of the biggest moves to advance sustainability. The city needs to make it easier to build attached housing, like row houses, because they are some of the most energy-efficient forms of housing that we have. The idea of permitting garage homes or granny suites throughout the city is another very positive move that needs to be supported.

Wallace: Recently the city has begun to add energy efficiency and sustainability requirements in all Requests for Proposals (RFPs) we issue for new housing and revitalization projects. For example, the RFP evaluation for the Arthur Cook warehouse restoration provided 30% of a total 100 points towards projects which demonstrated restoration techniques and materials which reduced energy consumption and considered environmentally-friendly materials. In RFPs for affordable housing, a similar amount of importance is assigned to items which will reduce energy and water consumption to increase affordability for the homeowner.

Are builders encountering fewer restrictions when they try to incorporate more energy efficiency and sustainability elements in the homes they build?

Leggett: What used to be a big restriction for certain types of green innovations was municipal code regulations. I think here in Saskatoon we are quite fortunate to have one of the best building standards departments of any municipality I am familiar with. Saskatoon's building standards branch

has, in our experience and over the past few years, been quite open-minded to looking seriously at, and supporting new sustainable practices.

Olson: In the past, the largest challenge has been finding buyers who would justify the investment in energy efficiency and sustainability. Our society has evolved and now environmental stewardship is right at the top of buyers questions to ask builders. As a result, the demand is making it much easier for builders to justify higher efficiency features in the homes they're building.

Wallace: The city is undertaking a review of standards related to the installation of wind turbines, solar panels, and so on. So far, there have not been many proposals to consider, but the enquiries into these types of energy generating items is increasing. Geothermal installations have been approved for many years already, and straw bale housing can be built anytime.

Are developers considering alternative forms of neighbourhood development to promote more healthy lifestyles, active living and sustainable development practices? Has the city made changes to encourage these kinds of practices?

Leggett: With the pioneering of model communities like Craik, Saskatchewan and others such as the green village starting by Mike Holmes near Okotoks, Alberta, and the Redwood Meadows Community near Cochrane, Alberta, I think a lot of interest has certainly been growing among many municipalities in the country. The city of Saskatoon has also been working on developing an environmentally-sustainable neighborhood called Evergreen, to be built near University Heights. Plans for the Evergreen neighborhood involve maintaining the majority of the indigenous trees on the site; streets are aligned to be south-facing to allow for maximum solar energy potential; and parks and trails are woven throughout the community.

Olson: Developers play with the cards they're dealt and unfortunately there are few opportunities to be innovative within the neighborhoods coming down the pipe. The Rivergreen Ecovillage is the most innovative form of housing underway in the city and it has only been possible within the River Landing project. Given its central location, a person could very easily live there without a vehicle, walk to work, and have better access to the lifestyle amenities that suburbanites dream of. I hope the city will use the South Caswell Hill and Warehouse District as opportunities to open the door for innovative developers to step up and deliver something unique and exciting to the city.

Wallace: Most of the recent attention in urban planning has been centred around 'smart cities', 'healthy cities', 'sustainable cities', etc. Developers are constantly reading the marketplace. They are adopting new features into neighbourhood concept plans related to healthy and active living. A return to a more grid-like pattern is one feature. Another feature is developing a mixed-use 'town centre' within neighbourhoods – essentially a small shopping area in the centre of the neighbourhood. This will allow people the choice to walk to the corner store or coffee shop. This is something we haven't seen for many years in neighbourhoods.

How is Saskatoon encouraging more density in development?

Leggett: Evergreen and River Green Ecovillage are both really good examples of environmentally sustainable communities that are in the works, and the city of Saskatoon has been very supportive of both projects (particularly given its role as the land developer for the former). I know that with both projects, the city has really been encouraging innovative urban designs with higher densities in order to keep the environmental footprint of land development to a minimum.

Olson: The granny suite initiative is a major step in this direction. Taken to the extreme, this single initiative has the

potential to nearly double the density of existing neighborhoods that are built around single-family dwellings. The secondary suite changes have also created more opportunities for higher density housing. The next step will be for the city to allow more opportunities for row-housing development on corner lots, which will likely come out of the upcoming City Visioning process. I'd really like to see the city create a cluster of tiny residential lots for home owner/builders to undertake. For example, the South Caswell Hill redevelopment would be an excellent area for a group of micro-homes that are designed for single professionals or single parents.

Wallace: Density is a strategy towards a more sustainable city. Saskatoon is aware that over 500 developable sites are sitting vacant within Circle Drive. The total area of these vacant sites is the equivalent of an entire new neighbourhood. Density increases are being promoted on two fronts. Firstly, the city is investigating a new incentive program to encourage builders and developers to use vacant sites and build in established and mature areas, including the downtown. Secondly, on a site-specific basis, the city is encouraging more units to be built through zoning changes, and potentially offering development bonuses. Once again, in all RFPs for new housing developments, proposals which provide more dwelling units usually score higher in their evaluation.

Where does Saskatoon fit on a North American scale in terms of sustainable urban planning?

Leggett: Saskatoon has certainly come a long way over the past few years and is quickly becoming a leader in Canada and in North America for its initiatives in sustainable urban planning.

Olson: Infill development and redevelopment are new challenges that the city of Saskatoon is wrestling with. Examples include the River Landing, Pleasant Hill, Warehouse District and South Caswell Hill redevelopments, all of which have had successful aspects plus lessons

learned. As I write this, I'm in Portland, Oregon touring exceptional examples of infill development. Portland has a long history of great urban planning and Saskatoon does not have to reinvent the wheel.

Wallace: Saskatoon is a compact city, by design and policy. However, within the compact design is a low-density of housing. For example, several large cities in North America contain densities which average eight units per acre. Saskatoon's average is four to five. Sprawl is not yet a large issue, but there has been a sharp increase in the demand for large lot acreages in the Saskatoon region and increasing density within the city is met with resistance by the general public. A close working relationship between the city and rural municipality of Corman Park is a key to avoiding the negative aspects of sprawl.

What are some of the energy-efficient and sustainability elements people should consider and look for when buying a new home?

Leggett: A lot of people do not realize how much can be done with existing homes with respect to moving towards greener and more energy efficiency. While there are a number of builders across the country that specialize in green new construction, there are very few companies doing renovation work that focus on a green approach. At Equinox, we have, over the past few years, researched a wide range of things that can be done around the home to make it more energy efficient. What we tend to spend a lot of our summers doing is gutting homes from the outside--so taking the siding and sheathing off--removing the old insulation and spray foaming the entire house envelope. More than anything else, upgrading a home's insulation to a spray foam system (including the attic space) can make a significant difference in terms of the home's energy footprint--shaving often up to 50% of its energy bills.

Another way people don't often see how they can make a significant difference in their home is in terms of the whole



range of products used in building and/or renovating the house, and their impact on the environment. For example, a typical renovation can easily result in several tonnes of debris in the landfill. Homeowners should be asking their renovators and builders to ensure that as much of the salvageable debris coming out of a home gets repurposed and recycled (using sources like Habitat for Humanity's Restore and Kijiji). What has always been even more disturbing for me is that almost all builders and renovators I know drop a bin on the job site and everything left over from the job including doors, paint, casings, flooring and tiling get thrown out because it is supposedly quicker and cheaper than repurposing them.

Olson: At a minimum, I would suggest that people should demand an Energy Star certified home. It's a third party verification that touches on a number of the major items that provide great benefits to buyers, like better insulation, windows and water consumption efficiency, plus it generates a \$1000 grant for the home buyers.

Winder: Although it is not very flashy, one of the best energy efficiency elements to a home is insulation. Weather stripping, good seals on windows, and an airtight envelope will help ensure a comfortable living space. In the spirit of reducing, look for the smallest house you can find that

will meet your needs – this will minimize your energy use and the materials used for construction and maintenance. Looking for durable cladding and roofing materials made from energy-friendly materials will reduce current and future environmental impacts. Choose a location close to where you work and play to reduce the amount of driving to events, and potentially open up the possibility of walking or cycling. If you are building a new home, orient it to maximize southern exposure and minimize windows facing west, north and east, creating a passive solar home. To reduce water requirements, look for water-efficient appliances, low-flow shower heads, low-flush or dual-flush toilets, and water-efficient landscaping. A high-efficiency furnace and water heater, and Energy Star appliances will help to reduce energy consumption. A simple way to help ensure an energy-efficient house is to look for R-2000 or Energy Star certification.

What are some of the most practical things a person in Saskatoon could do with their current home to maximize its sustainability?

Leggett: By far the simplest and cheapest first step that any homeowner can and should take is with weather stripping around leaky doors, windows, attic access panels, and electrical outlets, and rim joists.

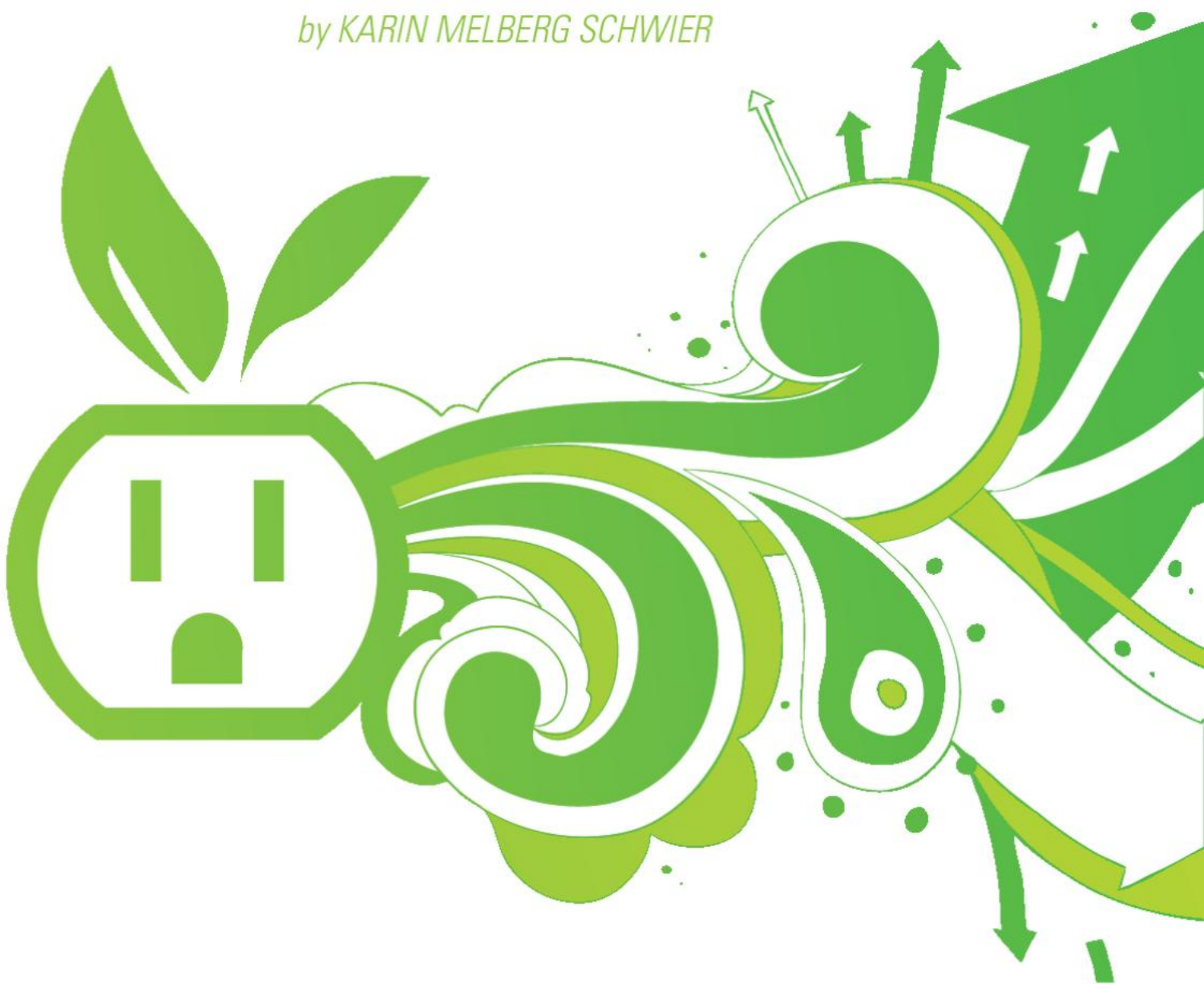
Olson: Maintenance is always the best investment. I've heard Saskatoon developer Ken Achs say that a tube of caulking to seal up leaky windows is the best energy efficiency investment a person could make and I'd agree with him.

Winder: Caulking around windows and other building penetrations and ensuring weather stripping is intact are important in keeping your home comfortable and reducing drafts. Turning appliances off is the best way to reduce energy consumption – unplugging the beer fridge for the winter and using power bars with switches to make sure the TV and stereo are actually off are two examples. Your furnace is an important part of the energy system in your house – make sure the filter is maintained, and if it is older and less efficient, consider replacing it with a high efficiency model. A \$15 rebate is available if you install a programmable thermostat. If you are replacing old appliances, buy Energy Star models (you don't pay PST!). To reduce water consumption, replace toilets with low or dual flush models (\$50 rebate available!) and install low flow shower heads and aerating faucets. Landscaping with drought resistant native plants that require less water helps, too.

Lean, “Green” New Home Appliances

They Do Their Job,
But You Have to Do Yours

by KARIN MELBERG SCHWIER





Photo, Courtesy Coast Appliances

New appliances are more energy-efficient than ever, even if they're not Energy Star-rated.

Whether it's buying smart Energy Star-rated appliances, maintaining what you already own, or replacing the 30-year-old energy-sucking clunker in your basement, there are a number of ways to go "appliance green." And we're not talking avocado.

Manufacturers, whether by legislation or good corporate citizenry, have "come a long way in responding to the demand for more energy-efficient appliances," says Gerry Tarko, general manager of Saskatoon Appliance Distributors, Inc. (Saskatoon Appliance). The Energy Star designations show what products have earned a desirable "below the normal average" kilowatt consumption rating. Designed by the Environmental Protection Agency in the U.S. during the Clinton presidency, these ratings exist for, among other items, washers, dishwashers, refrigerators and freezers, but not stoves or clothes dryers.

"Appliances with the Energy Star designation not only give the consumer information about how much energy will be used and how that appliance stacks up to similar products, but it also will save the consumer the PST," says Tarko. The PST savings on qualifying appliances is an incentive, but most customers are looking at the annual energy saving as the real deal.

The biggest culprits in energy consumption in most homes are refrigerators, clothes dryers and stoves. The least offensive are the dishwasher and laundry washing machine. Tarko cautions consumers, however, that Energy Star doesn't rate water consumption, just the number of kilowatts used. "Generally, though," adds Tarko, "if you use less water, you tend to use less electricity."



Go Ahead, Buy, and Give TLC a Try

Joe Both, owner of ARC Appliance Repair for 22 years, has been maintaining residential and commercial appliances for 35. Basic understanding of these machines, coupled with proper maintenance, is the best combination for making them work like they should, new or old.

"Read the manual!" he advises. When he's asked how to best prolong the life of an appliance and operate it most efficiently, he cites, "common sense as the most uncommon factor."

"You'd think you wouldn't have to say these things, but make sure the fridge door is actually closed before walking away from it," he says. "Turn the oven off when the meal is ready."

Don't leave the house when a washer, dryer or dishwasher is turned on. Washers have flooded; dryers keep drying; dishwashers can flood or run on for hours."

Buying New Saves Energy for You

Appliances are now light years beyond the energy consumption of previous generations, even if they don't have the Energy Star rating. So the "huge savings" are found in the difference between both Energy Star-rated and high-efficiency new appliances versus older ones.

To receive the Energy Star approval, the manufacturer must ensure the appliance is 20 per cent more efficient than required by current federal standards.

What this all means is that when you buy new, you're far better off in terms of energy savings than holding on to your old

appliance, even if the new one isn't Energy Star-rated.

Perry Schwark, general manager, Coast Wholesale Appliances, says there's not a huge difference in efficiencies of brand name new refrigerators or laundry machines, the high-end users of energy and water. Manufacturers have put their most concentrated efforts into improving the technologies of these appliances.

The biggest change has come in the technology and design of clothes washers, says Schwark. Whereas old top-load varieties could swallow a hefty 48 gallons of water per cycle, many new models now sip only 22.

"The majority of people are going to front load washers which are far more efficient than top load, and very competitively-priced," says Schwark. Two years ago, about half his customers opted for the traditional top load, and half for the newer front load. Today, 90 per cent are purchasing the front load variety.

What Do You Do with the Funky Old Fridge?

The Energy Guide was designed to inform people about energy use. So when Gerry Tarko of Saskatoon Appliance gets a 30-year-old

Frontloading washing machines consume less than half the water of top loaders.



Photo: Courtesy Coast Appliances



Be smart and replace your old fridge with a new one.

recycled 18 cubic foot fridge on the loading dock, he gets a kick out of the tag that says it chugs back 900 kilowatts of electricity. Today, the same size refrigerator will use 440. Even so, owners are sometimes hard-pressed to part with the old champ and will relegate it to the basement for extra chilling space.

"There it sits, using \$100 worth of electricity a year," Tarko says. "Today, you can get a good 18 cubic foot model for about \$500-- it would pay for itself in five years of energy waste by the old one."

Schwark agrees. "It simply makes no sense to put your old refrigerator in the basement where it sits sucking up the juice," he says. "It's nice to have that extra fridge space, but not at that cost when you can get rid of it, know that it's going to be recycled and you also save a lot of money."

If it's time to part with the old battleship-sized behemoth, environmental regulations ensure the freon, the volatile organic compound used as a refrigerant, is carefully removed and recycled. Metal is crushed and repurposed. Consumers can take heart that their old energy-guzzler will have a new life and a smaller footprint.

"The average life expectancy on the majority of appliances is eight to 12 years," explains Schwark. "Everyone is trying to find ways to make things operate more efficiently," he adds. "And you can't go wrong with that."

By Taking Care, You'll Reduce Appliance Repair

Here are a number of tips to keep your kitchen and laundry appliances in good working order. Repairman Joe Both provides a handy checklist for homeowners to keep in mind.

Automatic Washers:

Today, many more fabrics respond well to a cold-water wash.

Overloading is hard on parts and decreases performance. If the load is too heavy, the spin will a) not remove the water as well and the dry time becomes longer; and b) repeated overloading works the washer much harder than necessary and shortens its life.

Automatic Dryers:

Some dryers come with moisture sensors to be used with an automatic dry setting. If you are unsure of the proper drying time, this feature will reduce the run and heat time.

Clean lint and debris from the ductwork on an annual or semi-annual basis, and the lint filter in the dryer after each load. Overloading makes it work harder. Check the length of your dryer venting hose. The harder the dryer has to work to push air around twists and turns, the sooner it will wear out.

Dishwashers:

Run it when it is full and avoid using the energy-consuming 'heated dry' cycle. Stacking a dishwasher properly not only allows for better cleaning but also avoids any rewashing. The 'sani temp' cycle is not always required if water heater is set properly.

Refrigerators and freezers:

Check condenser coils (the radiator-type coil that is either mounted at the rear or underneath) and keep them clean to prevent the compressor from overheating.

Check the seal; sometimes when moving an appliance, a door can be sprung and will need to be adjusted slightly.

Ranges:

When using the oven, make sure the door gasket is sealing properly so the oven more effectively contains the heat. Don't forget to turn it off when the food is done!

Many Shades of Green:

A Home That Takes Sustainability
To a Whole New Level

by DARRELL NOAKES





The Franke home has grown in harmony with the natural surroundings.

When Candace and Gordon Franke moved to their Eagle Ridge Estates acreage 10 years ago, they wanted to establish a home that would fit with their sense of place.

The first thing the Franks did was track down Janet Wanner and her landscaping business, Gentle Earth Design Studios.

"She came out and we developed an architectural garden plan, based on what we wanted," says Gordon. "That's how we started. We weren't sure what plants would grow here. When you've lived in B.C. for a decade or more, you're used to everything just growing. You have to try real hard to kill plants in B.C.!"

The result is a yard that has grown in harmony with the land. One expression of that harmony stands prominently, head and shoulders above the surrounding landscape: a 10-kilowatt wind turbine. The turbine connects to the power grid, offsetting the family's utility costs — and reliance on electricity generated through combustion of fossil fuels — through SaskPower's net metering program.

The Franks had always been interested in wind-generated power, but weren't sure what solutions existed in Saskatchewan. Two years ago, they met the folks at Solar Outpost, and things took off from there.

"They came out and did some wind analysis, to see what would be feasible," says Gordon. Based on the conditions, they were able to sustain a 10-KW capacity, and the tower went up shortly after that.

Last year, they added geothermal heating and cooling, eliminating their natural gas furnace and electrical air conditioner. Liquid-filled pipes buried vertically below a small portion of yard behind the house transfer stored heat from the ground to the home interior in winter. In summer, the process is reversed, extracting heat from the interior air and cooling it through the liquid circulating through the heat exchanger, returning the heat to the ground through the buried pipes.

"We have no furnace in the house any more," Gordon explains. "The advantage is, in the winter there's no real need for natural gas use, so that's made a huge difference. In the summer, it will cool our house, so it will significantly reduce the electrical cost related to us having to have an air conditioning unit. With the full sun that we have, and lots of windows, the air conditioning was running all the time in the summer. We don't need that any more, and that's great."

The only use for natural gas now is the domestic hot water and two fireplaces. The geothermal has functioned flawlessly, Gordon says.

"We knew we had the backup with the fireplaces upstairs and downstairs. We could use those to heat the house if there was some kind of event, but there wasn't. It worked perfectly. In fact, we felt that it warmed our house more evenly than when he had our gas furnace. It was constant, upstairs, downstairs, one room to another. It was really quite good. We're very pleased with that.

The family has always been concerned about reducing their impact on the environment.

"You start thinking about it, you start looking at what options you have and what small changes that we can all do," says Candace. "You look at what your carbon footprint is going to be when you leave. Are you going to be using up as much of our natural resources as there are? What's left for the people that come after us? If everybody does a little bit, a little bit will amount to a lot."

"We're not fanatical about it," Gordon says. "But it's something that we can do, and as the technology became available, we thought we would take advantage of it."

"It's a life style that is easily adaptable whether it is recycling or composting or collecting rain water," says Candace, who works as registered nurse and volunteers with Ducks Unlimited Canada. "I had the opportunity a few years ago to work on a Canadian Nurses Association position paper looking at climate change and healthcare. My involvement with the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses Association found many other environmentally conscious RNs and we formed an Environmental Sustainability in Nursing group.

"It's really sustainability in health care," Candace says. "It's looking at the kind of cleaning products that you have, it's looking at being sustainable in your community, and encouraging community gardens, and healthy eating and living. It's a lifestyle that you adopt."

The Answer (to Renewable Energy) is Blowing in the Wind

Imagine what you could do with 10,000 watts of electricity generated in your own back yard. In Saskatoon, a 10 kilowatt Ventura turbine on a 70-foot tower like the one in Candace and Gordon Franke's yard could generate 10,000 to 16,000 kilowatt-hours of electricity a year. An average home in the province uses between 8,000 and 15,000 kilowatt-hours of power in that time, depending on family size and habits.

The VT10 wind generator forms the heart of Ventura's 12-kilowatt hybrid electric system. The 10-kilowatt generator feeds into a 12-kilowatt synchronous inverter and grid tie connection. The inverter is designed to accept an additional two kilowatts of energy from solar photovoltaic panels, although the Franks' system uses only the wind generator. The inverter automatically disconnects from the grid if utility power fails for any reason.

With this set-up, the Franks can take advantage of SaskPower's Net Metering Program, drawing from the power grid on days when the wind turbine produces little or no power and feeding back into the grid when winds produce more energy than the family can use. SaskPower allows customers to "bank" excess energy credits that can be applied to their accounts to offset power use.

The Ventura system was installed by Saskatoon's Solar Outpost two years ago. The 10 kilowatt setup is ideal for acreages and small farming operations, says Solar Outpost sales representative Lindsay Quick. With additional turbines, operations such as seed plants can see significant benefits, too.

"Here in Saskatchewan, we have both sun and wind," says Quick. "A lot of times, customers will ask us about how they can take advantage of both. Getting two separate inverters is most often how that happens. Customers would then do a

separate solar system and a separate wind system and connect them both into the grid where they're at. The difference with this particular system is that because it's a 12 kilowatt inverter, it allows for a two kilowatt solar installation with it, as well.

"A huge change for us has been the cost per watt of solar installed," says Quick. "That has changed significantly, just in the past 12 months — a 30 per cent decrease in the cost. At this time last year, we would have discussed only wind, with wind being your better economic return on your investment. Solar, because of the decrease in costs, has become a viable option."

"Something that evolved from this process of us installing turbines in smaller acreage lots like that one, as well as larger scale lots, is discussion with the community," says Quick. "It's so important. Making sure we have that conversation with the neighbours from the get-go is very important."

"One of the reasons why farmers are one of our biggest markets, is because they can actually write it off to business," Quick adds. "The depreciation schedule is actually 50 per cent. It makes a pretty big difference for what their payback period looks like."

In addition to net metering, SaskPower offers the Green Options Partners Program and Small Power Producers Program, in which customers can be paid for the power they generate.

- DARRELL NOAKES



Going to Ground

Geothermal, or more accurately, ground source heat pumps — distinguishing residential heating and cooling applications from geothermal energy extracted from deep within the planet — are catching on.

Installations work well for people looking for heating and cooling solutions for residential and commercial properties, says Quick.

"We do a little bit of both," she says. In one application, they replaced 10 natural gas furnaces in a 19,000 square foot former school with eight geothermal furnaces.

"The loops that were installed outside the building took up just about a full acre," she says. "That was very interesting."

Many early applications in Saskatchewan underestimated the size of the loop that needed to be installed for winter heating, says Quick. Those early mistakes left a bit of a chill on geothermal, but the technology is beginning to make headway more recently.

"For us here in Saskatchewan, we spend most of our time doing heating, instead of cooling," she says. "The biggest issue with geo is that we're not making heat, we're just borrowing the heat."

"In terms of designing it, it's important to make sure that you have enough loop so that, as the cycle reverses and you recharge, you have enough heat there to take for the wintertime again."



This cabin combines solar photovoltaic panels to provide electric power with a water source heat pump for interior heating and cooling. Similar to a ground source heat pump geothermal system, fluid is circulated through a loop of pipes immersed in the lake. Even in winter, there is enough thermal energy in the system to warm the building without any additional heat source.



Solar photovoltaic panels have become more common.

Solar Soars

Solar energy alternatives have evolved quite a bit recently, becoming more widely available in the market, says Quick.

"At the home show, we kind of had to beat people off with sticks," she says. "That's the way it's been for the past two years. It's been very good."

"In a lot of places, where we wouldn't have talked solar before, we do so now," she says. "Because of the pricing on solar and because of the availability of it, the payback is equally as good with solar."

Although Solar Outpost installs both thermal and photovoltaic systems, Quick notes that photovoltaic has recently become more prevalent.

"A lot of that has to do with the grant situation," she says. "Previous to March 31, there was a grant that was available for solar thermal systems for residential customers. But currently there isn't. That federal grant has been revoked as of March 31. That was \$2,250 that was available for customers at that time, and as it's not available now. The payback for solar thermal systems are quite long."

Much of that interest is coming from within Saskatoon, where the city is seeing some growth in the solar market. Traditionally, rural communities have been quicker to embrace solar photovoltaic as a means to offset electrical costs.

"The turnover in the ownership rate within the urban situations tends to be a lot quicker than it is in rural," Quick explains.

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DESIGN

Eco-Friendly Outdoor Comfort Patio and Deck Furniture and Accessories are Sustainable and Maintainable

During our short warm season, homeowners consider their decks, patios and back yards to be living spaces as significant as inside rooms for recreation and relaxation. The outdoor furniture and accessories they look for are ideally comfortable, practical and stylish. But guess what? They are also now eco-friendly and sustainable, too, a welcome bonus by fans of outdoor living.

"I think because people are closer to the environment when they're enjoying their outdoor spaces," says Kelly Caplette of Sew & Home, "they're more aware of it, and want to do their part in making sure that they're not leaving as much of a footprint on the world."

Speaking of being sustainable, today's outdoor furniture and accessories have a new higher level of durability and resistance, thanks in part to the materials being used to create them, and new breakthroughs in water-repellant and sun-resistant technologies.

Outdoor furniture like that offered through C.R. Plastic's Generation line of outdoor



Photo: Courtesy C.R. Plastic

These colourful outdoor chairs offered by C.R. Plastic are made of recycled plastic timber.

furniture are made from recycled plastic lumber. Both the colours, and the UV inhibitors designed to protect the furniture from fading, are blended in right at the manufacturing phase. This furniture is as long-lasting as they are environmentally-responsible.

For those who prefer a less traditional outdoor look, the eco-friendly contemporary designs offered by Mobital offer consumers a wide range of sofas, chaises, chairs and coffee tables, all made from a sustainable plantation teak with a naturally-occurring sun resistance.

Whether you choose traditional or contemporary-styled outdoor seating, comfort is in

the cushions. Style and sustainability enter the picture when you choose the in the right fabric.

To that end, new outdoor cushion fabrics have emerged that are made from recyclable materials and toxic-free dyes. Available in a variety of patterns and styles, these easy-to-clean and water-repellent cushions are now made of an easy-to-dry, weather-resistant foam, that can extend their life.

"It's reticulated," says Jenny Lucky of Charter House Interiors, "which is like a large cell plastic foam with a poly wrap for comfort, that dries in less than a third of the time of indoor foam."

"The cushions are also treated with UV inhibitors to ensure the fabric won't fade in the sun, and an anti-mould and anti-mildew inhibitor so they won't get those little black spots, and last a really long time."

For outdoor accessories, the environmental trend leans towards those which can serve a dual purpose both inside and out. This is a particular benefit to those of us in colder climates, who can only use our outdoor living spaces for a short period of time each year.

"From a green perspective," says Caplette. "It really cuts down on what you need to purchase and how much material you need or require. Rather



Photo: Courtesy blomus

Stainless steel fireplaces from Charter House Interiors and Sew & Home can be brought inside from the deck in the winter.

than buying two of something, you only need to buy one, which is also more cost-effective for the consumer."

That's why many of Caplette's customers love the long list of stainless steel accessories now being offered. Not only do they look good both inside and out, they are also 100% recyclable because of stainless steel's ability to be easily recovered for recycling purposes. With a life that spans several decades, stainless steel is proving to be an environmentally-friendly choice.

"Our stainless steel fireplaces are mainly used for their ambiance, rather than heat," says Caplette. "They're more decorative in nature, but still if you wanted to roast a marshmallow you could, because the fuel that's used in them is a plant-based ethanol that doesn't produce any toxic fumes or waste."

"And it's not just a summer accessory," adds Caplette. "You can take it in, in the wintertime, and use it right inside your home on a table top or placed directly on the floor. Unlike a wood flame, the ethanol flame is so controlled, you can have it right up against the house, or on your wooden deck and not be concerned with setting it on fire."

To enjoy the outdoors to their fullest, one needs to respect the outdoors, and the best way to do that says Caplette, is to look for furniture and accessories that have that environmental edge.

"As time goes on, and consumers become more aware and conscious, it will soon be absolutely necessary for retailers to start thinking green, and it will eventually become the norm for manufacturers as well."

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Thrill of the Hunt One-of-a-Kind Finds at Garage Sales and Flea Markets

"William Morris once wrote, 'Have nothing in your homes that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful.' I try to live by that motto."
— Chantelle Butterfield, interior designer & professional shopper

Summer is here and garage sale signs are popping up overnight like fields of daisies on every street corner. The temptation to hunt for treasures is overwhelming, whether you dig through your neighbour's castoffs or search at thrift shops or recycling depots.

Gems can be restored and repurposed to add a stylish and inventive touch to your own décor. Finding a deal is thrilling, but try to avoid making your home look like a perpetual garage sale.

"There's no better place to find 'gold' than at a flea market or a good neighbourhood garage sale," says interior designer Chantelle Butterfield, owner of Funktional Space, who fairly glows at the prospect of the new foraging season.

Butterfield particularly likes looking for old frames and transforming them into decorative accents for the home.

Ornate gold frames, for example, can be painted a more modern silver. Insert a mirror



Amazing treasures can be found at fleamarkets and garage sales and transformed into unique decor items.

into the newly-painted frame, and you have an elegant piece for the hallway.

"If you find a style of wallpaper you absolutely love but aren't quite ready to cover an entire wall with," adds Butterfield, "place a swatch over a tired old picture or poster, put it in an old frame and, voila!" Another unique wall accent.

Tami Nykiforuk of Revive Home Staging and Design, an interior designer and Saskatoon's first accredited staging

professional, says that even the good deals you find at flea markets and garage sales have to be useful.

"You don't usually go looking for anything in particular. It's fun and cheap!" she says. "But it's only a bargain if you really love it and you're actually going to use it."

Nykiforuk has a few tips for wanna-be interior decorators who love the thrill of the hunt:

- Be selective. Don't buy it just because it's cheap. It needs to have a reason or a purpose.

- Ask if lamps and appliances actually work. Plug things in.

- Is it fixable, paintable, cleanable?

- Can it be glued, screwed or re-upholstered?

- Be creative and open-minded. Think of different and unusual ways to use things.

- A few off-the-wall pieces can be attention grabbers but don't over-do it!

- Don't be shy to ask for a better deal. Do you still want it?

- Shop early for best selection. Shop late for the best prices.

Found *objets d'art* are as limitless as the projects you may create. According to Butterfield, if you shop using the four R's—reduce, reuse, rethink and recycle—you could end up with something funky and completely unique for which many people would pay handsomely.

"With so many of us changing our interior décor, we have an abundance of accessories," says Butterfield. The trick, she adds, is to not just develop an eye for items that will enhance your space, but to free up space in which to put them.

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"Have your own garage sale or give things to charity to free up valuable space," she advises. Charity and thrift shops she adds, are infested with items that deserve a second look.

Theresa Torgunrud is a professional home organizer and runs In Place Organizing. "Collecting and attractively displaying items that resonate with us is an important part of making a house a home," she says. But just getting *more* makes displaying those things difficult.

"Garage sales are potential treasure chests. It's a good idea to move something out whenever you bring in something 'new.' Change your focus," she advises, "to appreciating what you have rather than always wanting more."

Learning how to display

items can also help avoid the feel and look of clutter. "If your decorating style is eclectic," says Torgunrud, "the possibilities are nearly endless as you incorporate meaningful objects into any area of the home. If items are of a distinctly different character than a desired look and feel of a room, devote a place to presenting them together in one place."

Garage sales and flea markets can be a fun way to spend an afternoon and an inexpensive source of interesting accessories, but be careful.

"We're all guilty of getting caught up in the spirit of junk sales," says Nykiforuk. "The good thing is, you only paid a dollar for it in the first place so you can always put it in your own yard sale next year!"

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SPOTLIGHT

Craik Green Home Foundation for a School of Social Responsibility

The 7,000 square foot building that Brent and Monica Kreuger constructed at Craik Eco-Village is more than just a house. It's the starting point of a much larger dream.

The place is hard to miss. It's the large, cedar-sided, red-roofed structure off Highway 11 near the Craik Eco-Centre. The structure itself is impressive. Insulated concrete form construction with a R-60 roof prevents heat from escaping the building envelope. The windows predominantly face south, using solar gain for passive heating. A Danish wood pellet boiler supplies domestic hot water and in-floor heating. Composting toilets, grey water filtration and water recovery systems reduce consumption and eliminate sewage. It will generate more electricity than it uses, once solar panels and a wind turbine are installed later this summer.

"It will eventually have a zero carbon footprint in its operation," says Brent, summing up all the features of the house.

But it will also be luxurious: acacia maple flooring

throughout, tile in the kitchen, Spanish marble in the bathrooms.

"We built it as the first stage of what will become a full high school campus," says Brent.

"We were going with this earth-friendly construction, and once we got the shell up



This hard-to-miss green home in Craik is positioned for maximum solar gain.



Photo: Brent Kreuger

The only thing remaining to complete in the great room is the log mantle and and stonework around the high efficiency fireplace.

and were finishing it, someone said, 'Don't cheap out now. You've got this fantastic place. Don't cheapen it by putting in laminate or bargain basement finishing. So we didn't.'

More importantly, it's what the house represents that makes it unique. It's the first building of a much larger campus to follow, what Monica and Brent describe as Saskatchewan's first completely private high school focusing on socially-responsible entrepreneurship, environmental sustainability, global citizenry and technology, all delivered in an experiential environment geared to develop critical thinking skills. Praxis International Institute will accommodate up to 200 students when it's complete.

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"The foundation of what we teach is entrepreneurship with a purpose," Brent continues. "It is based upon our adult program, which we've been teaching through the Praxis School of Entrepreneurship for over 20 years."

"We're not just building a 'green' house, although student-run greenhouses will be part of the food supply. It's a school where we want to show and educate people that you can build an environmentally-friendly place without giving up creature comforts. We went overboard just to

demonstrate the fact that you can still live in relative luxury while reducing your carbon footprint."

"The first building is a home," Monica adds. "We don't want to build the whole campus right away because our students will be part of designing the next structures. We want the building of the campus to be part of the educational experience. Our first students will live and go to school in the first building – kind of like a big home school. As our student base grows, they'll move into those



Photo: Brent Kreuger

There are six similar mosaics embedded in various parts of the facility including five in various floors and one in the kitchen island.

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buildings and this will become home to visitors and the principal of the school."

"It'll be like the president's residence," says Brent with a smile.

Craik wasn't their first choice, and a "green" building wasn't the first thing that came to mind. They had looked at buying properties in other towns and nearly concluded one deal when it fell through. The eco-village practically fell into their laps unexpectedly, yet in hindsight, seemed like providence.

The other facilities they viewed were energy-intensive

and wasteful, entirely unlike the life the Kreugers had built for themselves over the years. The couple had renovated their Saskatoon home, built in the mid-1960s, to be more energy-efficient than before.

"We did a lot of work on our house," Monica says. "That included replacing windows, insulating and replacing our lawn with a xeriscaped yard so we never have to water. We have paid a local company to pick up our recycling and committed to reducing our garbage to one bag every two weeks. We continue to work towards reduction of

our carbon footprint. It's how we live."

While driving home from Regina one day, the idea hit Brent that the Craik eco-village was just the right fit for the school. Instead of continuing along the highway, he turned off the road.

"Before you knew it, we had purchased some lots," Monica says. "Their goals just fit our philosophy. Entrepreneurship, environmental sustainability and global citizenry, which is our other passion, all came together in that location."

"Everything that we do has been focused on helping people become self-sufficient," Brent continues. "When we went out to Craik and started talking to some of the people out there, we found ourselves using the same vocabulary and finishing each other's sentences. On the way home, we had this 'whack on the side of the head' moment — of course, it makes sense! You can't be self-sufficient unless you're sustainable."

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PRACTICAL

More Than Just an R-Rating: Other Ways to Improve Your Home's Energy Efficiency

When the values of all the components that insulate your home against wind, weather and heat loss are added up, you'll come up with a number the construction industry typically uses to measure its thermal resistance: the R-value.

It is said that the higher an insulating product's R-value, the better it is to insulate your home. Clayton Connell of McMorrow Construction says this isn't necessarily true.

"When they test all these products for R-value, they're tested in a perfect climate with no wind and no moisture," says Connell. "But in the field, different temperatures on different surfaces will skew testing. Throw in some wind, and some gusts and you'll never get the same reading on a test twice."

"Instead of just being concerned about upgrading the R-value of your home [with product]," says Connell, "what you really should be concerned with is sealing your house and reflecting the heat away."



Photo: Courtesy McMorrow Construction

After an energy makeover by McMorrow Construction, the efficiency rating of this older home rose from 13% to 805.

A better way than the R-value to determine how energy-efficient your home is, explains Connell, is to have a vacuum test performed by a certified specialist that can help determine your home's percentage of efficiency.

"Different ratings exist for different styles of homes," explains Connell. "Once a home is tested, it's classified according to its age, and then rated it."

If the home rates low, says Connell, both the owners and their energy bill could benefit from some renovations that would ensure the house is sealed against the elements.

A Rate-Increasing Renovation

In one example of a home renovated by McMorrow Construction, the owners had earlier discovered after undergo-

ing testing, that their home was rated at a dismal 13%. Built in the early 1900s, before insulation products were as advanced as they are today, the home was in need of some serious renovations to improve its energy efficiency.

Working from the knowledge that a portion of the home's energy deficiencies resulted from a lack of insulation, the crews at McMorrow blew in a fibrous cellulose insulation, made out of recycled products. With an extra 16 inches of insulation in the attic, the house was fast on its way to achieving its energy efficient makeover.

Next on the agenda was the removal of the home's siding, and the installation of solid 4 x 8 Enerfoil foam boards that help reflect heat away from the house, while also stopping wind from entering.

With the home's attic and walls better insulated, the crew's next project focused on replacing the home's windows with new triple-paned low-E argon casement ones, which ensure a home's heat is kept inside during winter and outside during summer.

While double-paned windows are the usual coded standard for Saskatoon today, Connell says it's a standard that could be changing sometime in the very near future.

"There is serious, serious talk about actually mak-

All Insulations Are Not Created Equal

Adding insulation is an important factor in improving the energy efficiency of a home. Be aware of a product's positive points and downsides when making your choices.

■ **Batt Insulation:** A fibrous insulation that can be found in most homes. Readily available in a few different forms, it comes in plastic-wrapped bales that unroll to reveal a product much like a fibrous blanket that can fit snugly between wall studs. The downfall to this product is that should it ever get wet through the natural moisture process that goes on in a wall, it will start to lose its effectiveness and its R-value significantly.

■ **Spray Foam Insulation:** One of the best products on the insulation market, it sprays in as a liquid and expands to fill all the cracks and crannies air can leak through. The downfall lies in the expense, not only of the product but in the major renovation that is required to allow the old insulation to be removed and the new insulation installed. This is typically done either by opening up the inside wall by removing all the drywall, or removing the siding or stucco on the outside.

■ **Enerfoil Foam Board:** A 4 x 8 foam sheet that varies in thickness, it effectively reflects heat away from the house and blocks wind from entering the home. Its downfall can lie in improper installation, when all of its joints are taped and sealed and the wall is not left open with adequate room to breathe. Once sealed, it can create a double vapour barrier situation, which can allow condensation to be trapped within the wall, eventually leading to rot.

■ **Combination Enerfoil/Spray Foam:** Using the best of two products, Enerfoil board is placed on the outside walls, and after the outside veneer of siding or stucco is replaced, high-problem areas such as outlets or any extrusions are then treated with a spray on foam. Left untreated, these high problem areas can add up to the equivalent of a door being left opened.

■ **Insulated Concrete Forms:** For new home builds only, exterior of the house is made out of a concrete form with foam insulation surrounding it. Blocks with foam are first put together to build the foundation and then filled with concrete, sealing the exterior. Its downfall lies in its expense, but it can bring a home up to as high as an R-50 value, which is just about as high as you can go.



Photo: Courtesy McMorrow Construction

The outside door received an upgrade to fiberglass.

ing our standard in this area, Zone D, which is usually reserved for places like Alaska and the Northwest Territories. So if you were to invest in double-pane windows, there is a likelihood that in the next couple of years you'd actually be sub code."

The outside door received an upgrade to fiberglass, and foam insulation was sprayed in the joist space between the floor and basement ceiling, a place Connell classifies as being a very high-risk area for outside air to get through.

The home was now ready to be undergo its second vacuum test.

The result?

"After the renovation, the home was tested and rose from 13% to an 80% efficiency rating," says Connell. This startling improvement will mean significant reductions in the home's heating costs.

"A lot of homeowners are seeing the light about the need for an energy-efficient home," says Connell. "People are better educated than ever before about it and with Saskatoon's home values increasing, people are now sitting on some equity, so there's never been a better time to do an upgrade."

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Moving is a chore, whether from home to home or business to business. It requires time finding enough previously-used boxes in the right sizes and then disposing of them later. Or, there's the considerable money you'll spend buying new ones. And let's face it, cardboard boxes are not the most environmentally responsible things to use, even if you do recycle the cardboard.

Amela Mujkic and her family were thinking about all this when they started their simple, yet ingenious new Saskatoon business, Billy Boxx, in 2009. "We realized how difficult and wasteful the cardboard box moving method was and we came up with our recyclable plastic container idea."

Simply put, when you're ready to move, Mujkic's company will deliver you the number of plastic packing boxes you require and then pick them up when you've finished unpacking, all for a reasonable rental fee.

"It's cheaper and more planet-friendly than the traditional cardboard box and tape method and you can save 6-9 hours per move by eliminating the hassle of box finding, building and disposal," she says.



Amela Mujkic shows off Billy Boxx's stackable, recyclable moving containers. Photo: Courtesy Billy Boxx

Billy Boxx service is available to residents moving locally in Saskatoon, Warman and Martinsville.

First, you order the number and sizes of boxes you need. Two dimensions are available: 21 x 15 x 12 inches, and 27 x 17 x 10.5 inches. For free, the company delivers them to you as per your moving requirements. And when you're finished unpacking the containers, you call the company and they'll come and retrieve them.

How simple and practical is that?

Billy Boxx makes its money by charging you a rental fee that is less expensive than purchasing tape and cardboard boxes. You won't be building and taping any boxes because your rented plastic containers will be right there, stacked, waiting for you to fill them with your belongings.

The plastic, green-friendly boxes also have ergonomic handles that make lifting less

strenuous and awkward. This strategy of moving can actually help ease your back and legs from improper lifting of oversized, heavy containers.

The Billy Boxx containers can also be properly secured to protect your real valuables.

"Have you ever locked a cardboard box?" asks Mujkic.

Along with security comes the secure feeling of knowing your belongings won't be damaged by weather. "The Billy Boxx container will not wilt in the rain," she says. "Your belongings are safe from weather and water when stored and moved in the secure plastic design."

Perhaps the most important ethical reason for using the Billy Boxx moving system is the sustainability factor. Each plastic box eliminates the destruction of two to three trees in its working career, says Mujkic. How many cardboard boxes are re-used dozens, if not hundreds, of times like these plastic containers? Not many.

Then, there's the amount of time and energy that can potentially be saved by using the Billy Boxx system when you move. Mujkic says it could be up to nine hours, which is the equivalent of a complete working day.

Mujkic's business is smart, yet simple. Isn't that what sustainable living is all about?

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INSIDE

Pretty and Purifying: Indoor Plants Add Designer Flair and Clean the Air

Tropical plants are a key part of design for residential interiors. They are nature's works of art; they succeed in bringing the natural green world that surrounds us into our private world at home. A few carefully-placed plants in a beautiful collection of pots and planters can be the balancing agents that finish a room with style and grace.

Plants are living entities. We can nurture and grow them, watch them mature and bloom. Indoor tropical plants allow us to have a private garden in the house summer or winter. Bringing nature inside gives us a calm and beautiful space in our daily lives.

Green's Good for Your Health

There is overwhelming evidence and research that shows a correlation between growing indoor plants and positive mental and physical benefits for the people who live with them. Their ability to remove volatile organic compounds from the atmosphere is at the top of the list.

In general, tropical plants with the most surface area, that is, lots of big leaves, are the best workers when it comes to air purification. Dracaenas,

especially 'Janet Craig', bamboo palms, peace lilies and rubber plants all place in the top 10. These plants are easy to find and best of all, they are easy to take care of. Most of them don't mind some low light or if you forget to water them for a day or two.

Sunlight is essential to all plants, though some can be placed in shady corners and still survive. Others will need a home in sunlight to look their best and not decline through the winter months. An east or west window is the best location for most tropical plants.

Nature's Elegant Decor

These days, people select their indoor plants and pots or planters with as much consideration as choosing a piece of furniture. Tropical plants are a hard-working part of any décor as they are literally living art.

Most large plants are situated in the corners of a room; they soften those corners and draw the eye to a seating arrangement or a chair to sit in and read a good book. An extra bonus is that a large tropical plant has a direct effect on the air quality surrounding it.

Smaller plants can serve as an expressive and colourful centrepiece on a coffee table.

Too many plants in a space tend to look a little cluttered; the contemporary style is to show off a couple of well-maintained, beautifully-structured plants in an equally attractive pot that adds to your interior design. Think of the arching form of an areca palm, one of the top air cleaners. In addition, its soft gracefulness adds a lot of moisture to the air.

The style of planter or pot you choose should relate to your interior decor



Photo: Courtesy Gentle Earth Design Studios Ltd.

Well-placed plants enhance interiors and help to purify the air as well.

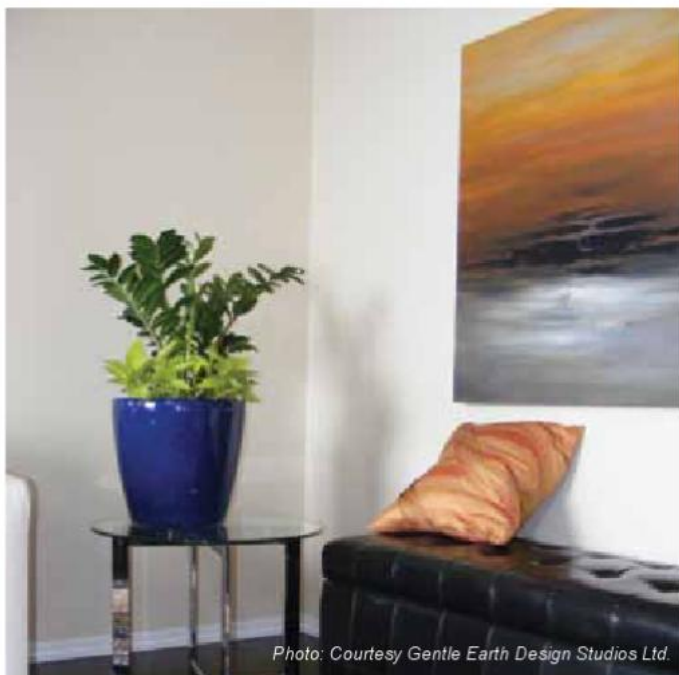


Photo: Courtesy Gentle Earth Design Studios Ltd.

Choosing the right-coloured pot makes all the difference in complimenting your indoor plant.

PROVEN PLANT PURIFIERS

NASA and Associated Landscape Contractors funded a two-year study to evaluate 12 different tropical plants for their ability to eliminate some of the more common chemicals that we live with in our homes and offices. Formaldehyde, benzene and trichloroethylene are common pollutants in glues, floor coverings, particleboard and fabrics. These plants were rated according to their ability to remove these and other indoor pollutants from surrounding air. Bamboo palm, the spider plant, flowering chrysanthemum and the Peace lily were among the most effective. The study is ongoing. View: www.humeseeds.com/purify.htm.

preference. Someone who favours a casual country style or likes Mexican flair might likely choose a red clay pot to show off the great agave from last summer's patio. Yet that same blue green agave would be fabulous in a wedge-shaped, tall black pot showing off its architectural shape in a modern setting.

The ZZ plant (*Zamioculcas zamifolia*) is one of those architectural beauties. It has arching branches of shiny leaves that become a conversation piece with everyone who sees it. It does not like to be over-watered and is very resistant to insects, just right for the person with a busy lifestyle.

The old-fashioned Sansevieria has made a big comeback and has been improved with new stripes and colours. Whether as a single plant in pot or in a row of three in a window box style planter, its geometric shape sets the tone for the whole room. The plant is so easy to grow and if you are a little neglectful of it, it doesn't mind. Interesting

mulch really sets off Sansevieria, just like other plants.

Experimenting with the unique colours of indoor plants is really fun. The variegated *Stromanthe 'Triostar'* has a dramatic ruby underside that would look great in a tall ruby or white pot that shows its coloration to best effect.

The best modern planter colours for a contemporary setting are white and black; they can really enhance your favorite tropical.

The lime green dracaena 'Limelight' looks very striking in a dark blue pot.

A shiny stainless steel planter, hard-edged and strong, would become very interesting focal point with a soft 'Fluffy Ruffles' fern in it.

One of nature's best artistic works of art is a single orchid in a glass jar with clear, fresh water, its roots showing below a magnificent flower stem.

Besides creating natural beauty in your home, today's indoor plants bring you serenity and healthier air and such a simple, delightful concept!

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OUTSIDE

Energy-Efficient Hot Tubs

It's All About Insulation, Covers and Heating

When looking to enjoy the relaxing, soothing waters of a home spa or hot tub, many people are looking for systems that ease their consciences and wallets as well as their aching muscles. Spa owners can rest assured knowing there are new energy-efficient tubs that require less energy and money to heat, lowering their carbon footprint without lowering their lifestyle.

The key to having an energy-efficient hot tub lies in its insulation, the method by which it is heated, and in knowing the right questions to ask.

"The big question to ask," says Lorne Horning of Sundance Spas, "is how much, on average, does the tub cost to run per month? Here in Canada, obviously during the winter months, tubs are going to cost a little more to run. That's just a fact of life. When it comes down to it, people need to know what is the cost to run it in winter and what is the cost to run it in summer. The closer these two figures are, the more energy-efficient the tub."

With Canada currently the fastest growing market in retail hot tubs, Horning says



What makes today's hot tubs eco-friendly is their energy efficiency.

the industry has responded by ensuring that today's tubs are better insulated against the cold.

"Before, when most tubs were made in the States, they didn't really have a lot of insulation because it wasn't really needed. But now that Canada has become such a big market for hot tubs, everybody is putting a lot more effort into their insulation."

This is a sentiment Beachcomber owner Rob Keep says has paid off with the usage of spray-in insulation called Ice-nene that can expand to fill the space between the tub's skirt and shell.

"How it's sprayed in," says Keep, "is one of the big things

that can change your energy efficiency and the cost of operation."

Another major factor that helps a properly-insulated tub is the cover used to ensure that heat does not escape.

Also, the latest generation of covers have eliminated a long-held problem.

"Covers lose their efficiency when they take on the water formed by condensation," says Chuck Walker of Arctic Spas. "But with a new innovation called Mylo-Vac, which is an aluminum film the cover is wrapped in, steam is prevented from penetrating the insulated foam, which ensures that it does not conduct any heat out of the tub."

Equally important to a tub's energy efficiency are the technological advances that have improved the management systems that work to heat the tubs. They run the gamut from a new method of directly heating the water using a titanium coil, to alternative energies such as geothermal and solar energy that can work to power a spa's heating system.

"We can build a solar system, that based on our energy guide numbers, will provide you with the power needed to run your hot tub for a year," says Keep. "It operates as a grid-tied system so the solar panels become tied to your Sask Power grid, which means that your power bill won't

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change at all when the tub is running."

"The added benefit can be," adds Keep, "that if you winter down south and shut your tub down for three months, the solar panels are still there, but now the power they generate is going directly against the energy bill for your house, instead of towards your tub. It's all part of being more green and more efficient."

Lorne Horning summarizes it all succinctly by saying that most tubs today are all oper-

ating within \$5 to \$10 a month of each other, because of the advancements in spa technologies.

"Materials and procedures are all sort of within that dome right now, where everybody is kind of getting the knack of it," says Horning. "The primary thing is that you want lots of insulation. That's the big thing to look for, because that's what is going to prevent heat loss."

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BACKWORDS

Eighth Street: This Strip was Made for Cruising

One of the first things every newly-licensed 16-year-old does is go cruising. It is a North American rite of passage. Wherever there are automobiles and asphalt, there are kids out cruising on Saturday nights. Nor is it only youngsters, although for us older types, it may be more about nostalgia than adventure. And while there are lots of long strips of pavement here in Saskatoon, whether you're young or old, if you want to go cruising on a warm summer night, 8th Street is, and always has been, the place to be.

"What about Main Street?" people sometimes wonder. Why is 8th Street the big enchilada on the east side and Main Street just another bit of residential backwater? When the original Saskatoon Temperance Colony – present-



Eating drive-in style at the Dog 'n Suds, 1960

day Nutana – was first laid out in the 1880s, Main Street led down to the all-important ferry crossing. This was in the days before the City of Bridges had any.

The ferry was later moved downstream to Victoria Av-

enue, and Main Street lapsed in importance.

In 1911, the city planned to build a bridge across the river connecting 8th Street and 11th Street. When real estate developers submitted plans for the proposed Buena Vista

neighbourhood, City Council ordered them to widen 8th Street as far as Clarence Avenue, to accommodate the bridge traffic. The bridge was never built, but its legacy remains in the wide, boulevarded main artery that 8th Street became.

Until 1955, Saskatoon's city limits were at Preston Avenue on the east, Glasgow Street in the south, Avenue W on the west, and 38th Street in the north. But most people tended to cluster pretty close to the river, and on the east side, the city faded very quickly into country once you got past 8th and Clarence. In the 1930s, civic planners even recommended that Saskatoon not be allowed to grow east of Clarence, owing in part to the difficulty of extending civic services that far east of the river.

There were houses past Clarence, of course, and other things. The Colonial Square Motel at 8th and Wiggins first opened in 1949 as Blouin's Auto Court, a "tourist camp"



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Development along 8th Street increased dramatically from 1927 (below) to 1958 (above).



Looking west on 8th Street from Arlington Avenue, 1963.

consisting of a group of small cabins with an open area for trailers to park. It was the first of the 8th Street motels, and was built to capitalize on the automobile tourism market, which was growing rapidly after the war. The Lutheran College and Seminary stood for many years on the south side of 8th, just past Louise. Before that, the Children's Aid Home – precursor to the present-day Kilburn Hall – was at that location.

City directories from before the First World War actually show listings as far out as present-day Brevoort Park. But in those days, the lights of Saskatoon would have been the most distant of twinkles

on the horizon, offering scarce comfort to people living alone and lonely beyond the reach of electricity, water, sewer and the other amenities of city life. Until 1938, the street car tracks to Sutherland ran along 8th Street as far as present-day Acadia Drive, but that was the extent of municipal services. When Farley Mowat writes about tramping across the prairie as a boy, exploring poplar bluffs and sloughs beyond the city's edge, it is Saskatoon's southeastern fringe he is remembering.

From 1931-1946, Saskatoon grew very little. During the Great Depression, the city's population actually shrank. But after 1946, Saskatoon



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was like a town gone wild. Between the thousands of returning soldiers – some with brides and children in tow – and the population explosion that followed, Saskatoon experienced a boom the likes of which it hadn't seen since 1912. In 15 years, the population more than doubled, from 46,000 at war's end to 95,000 in 1961. In 1945, the eastern fringe was as sparsely developed as it had been 30 years before. Twenty years later, the fringe had exploded into life. New neighbourhoods, built in the modern-style, sprang full-grown out of the prairie on either side of 8th Street east to Preston, with more to come.

Where "old" Saskatoon had been mostly laid out along a traditional grid pattern, the new east side neighbourhoods had "progressive" written all over them. Beginning with Grosvenor Park, the whole philosophy of neighbourhood planning changed, with curving streets arranged in a hierarchy of residential crescents, collector streets and access roads designed with one primary goal in mind: to accommodate the automobile.

While there had been cars in Saskatoon since the early 1900s, here – as elsewhere in North America – their numbers skyrocketed after the War. Everybody wanted a car, and for the first time in decades, had enough money to buy them. The number of cars in Saskatoon tripled between 1950 and 1960.

And it seems like the first thing people want to do when they buy a car is... go cruising.

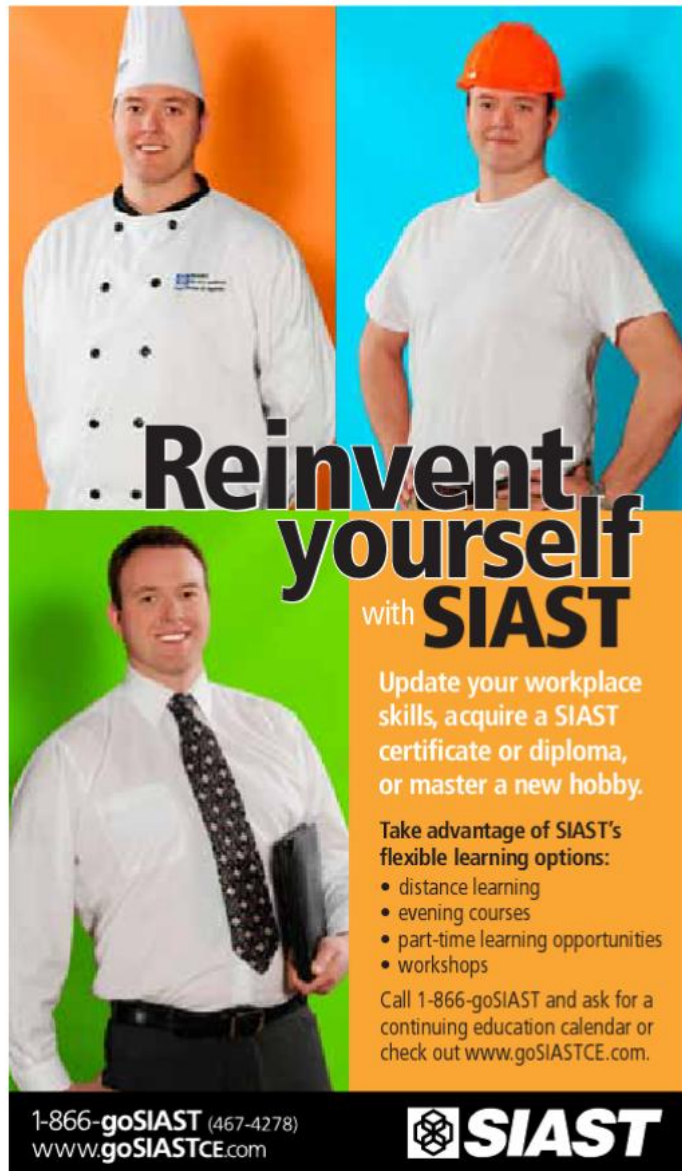
And with that, 8th Street finally came into its own.

It's the "Strip" that makes 8th Street special. Not the elegant residential bit west of Broadway (pleasant though

it is) or even the newer commercial stretch east of Circle Drive, with its own string of malls and plazas. It's the original 8th Street strip; that endless cascade of neon signs and parking lots, shopping malls and car dealerships, fast-food joints and small businesses that stretches from about Cumberland almost to Circle Drive. This is the part that was first built up during the late 1950s and 60s, the Golden Age of Cruising.

Perhaps we should blame it on Joe and Madeline Young, who in the summer of 1953, opened the El Rancho Bar-B-Q restaurant on 8th Street just east of Goodwin, where the Granary is now. People thought he was crazy. "That's halfway to Regina," they scoffed. And: "People won't eat in cars!" But they were wrong. The El Rancho was a huge draw, bringing young people from all across the city to park, eat and visit. Old people, too! When the restaurant was enlarged a few years later, the Youngs added a microphone part way up the driveway where you leaned out to order your food, which was brought to you when you got to the building. How's that for visionary?

Through the '50s, 8th Street motels such as the "Big T", the Eastview and the Holiday House (where Superstore is now) opened to cater to the growing needs of the motor-ing public. The Starlite drive-in theatre was another landmark from the early 1950s, on the north side of 8th just east of Argyle Avenue. All through the 1950s and '60s, diners, miniature golf courses, driving ranges, car dealerships, service stations and other businesses sprang up along the strip. The Skateland Roller Rink stood at 2700 8th Street for many years, just up from



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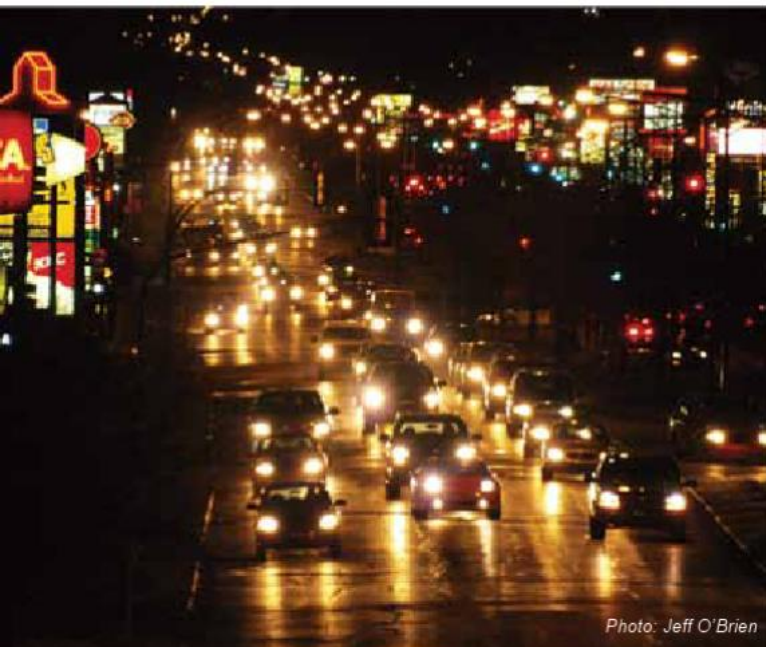


Photo: Jeff O'Brien

At night, traffic transforms 8th Street into a river of gold.

the Saskatoon Animal Hospital at Goodwin and 8th, where the Cave – that tribute to Flintstone's-era architectural sensibilities – now stands. The

Dog & Suds and A&W drive-ins – names synonymous with summer fun in Saskatoon in the 1960s – both opened in 1959, as did that most iconic

of 8th Street establishments, the Dairy Queen which – a half century later – still serves cold treats on hot days to walk-up customers at the corner of 8th and Morgan.

While it wasn't all burgers and drive-ins out on 8th Street East in the 1950s and '60s, these were the establishments that made it memorable. City directories through the 1950s even show a persistent mix of residential development strung along the street. But most of these houses would have been poorer quality – some little more than shacks, moved out where Saskatoon's building inspectors would leave them alone – and they were quickly swept away when the street filled in. There was a small group of hold-outs on the south side of 8th, at Argyle (perhaps they liked being close to the drive-in theatre) but even they were all gone by the late 1960s.

8th Street has changed. Cruising has changed. Sure, kids still cruise 8th, but gas prices aren't what they were in 1962 – or even in 1982 – and modern-day concerns about pollution and climate change have curtailed some of those endless laps up and down the strip that were such a part of summer for so many. Street racing – another 8th Street tradition – has largely fallen out of favour as well, and thankfully so. But for anyone who came of age here in the last 50 years, the 8th Street strip continues to have a romance and a magic unlike any other piece of pavement in all of Saskatoon. It is as much a part of our collective identity as that other river – the wet one – that also runs through this city and features so prominently in the imaginations of its people.

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